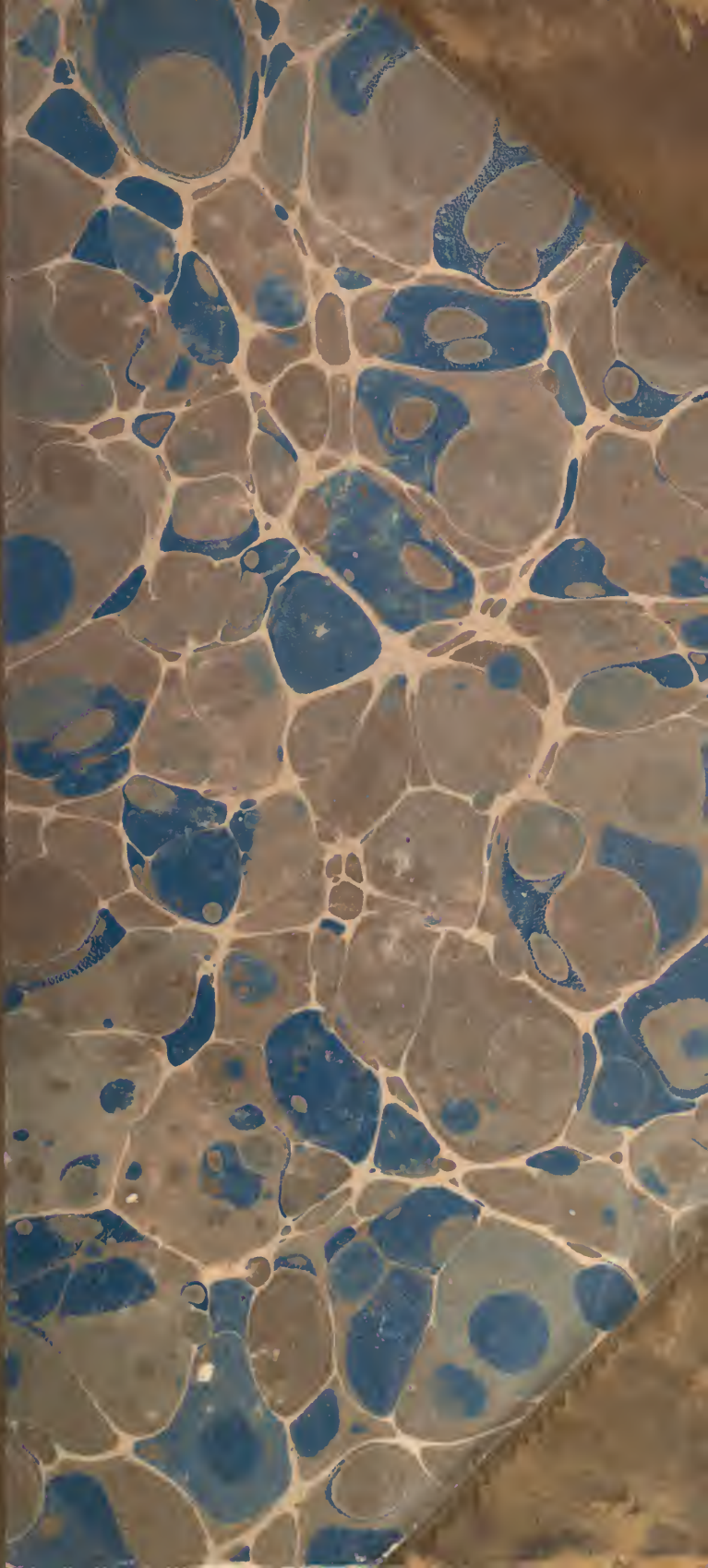


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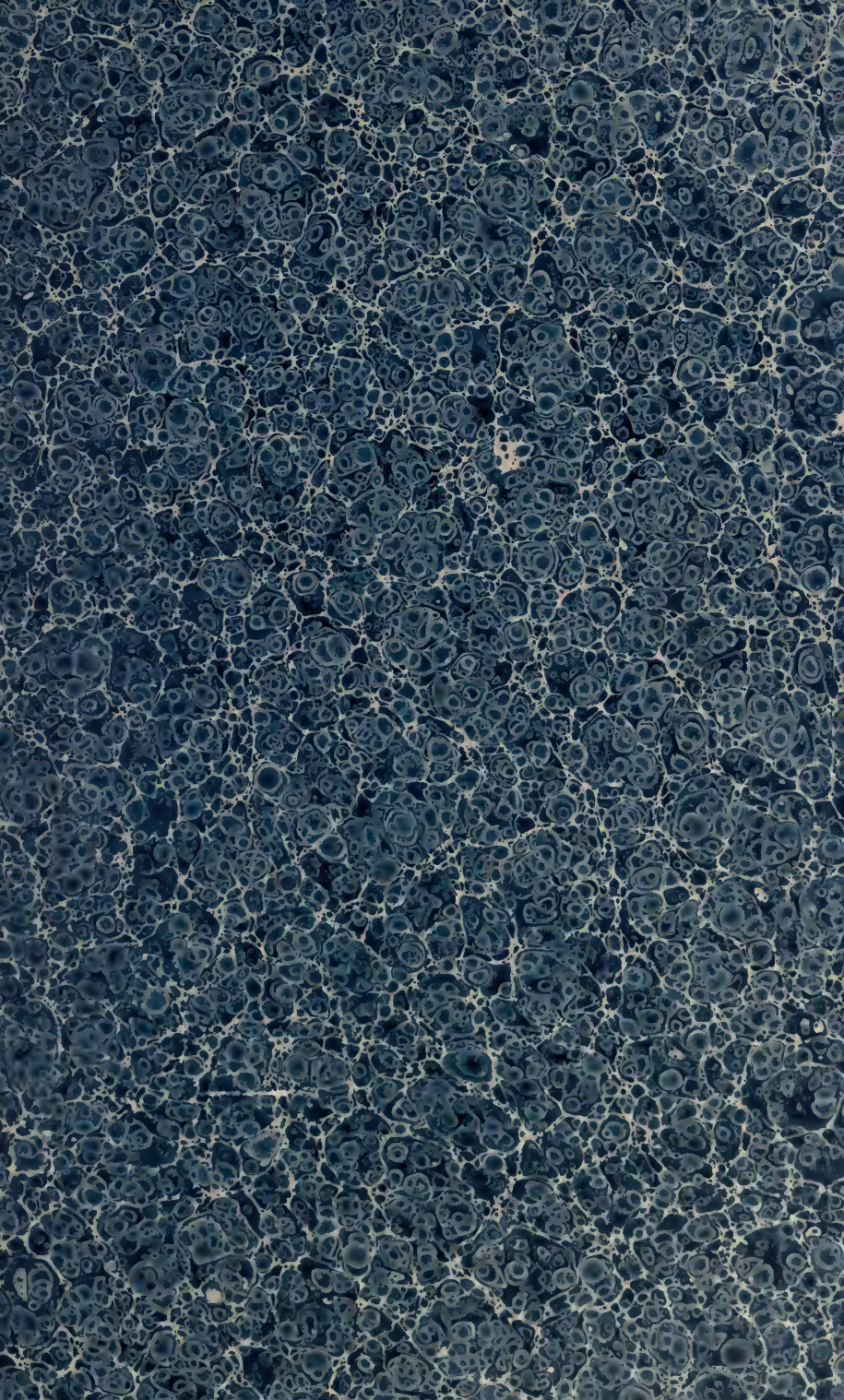
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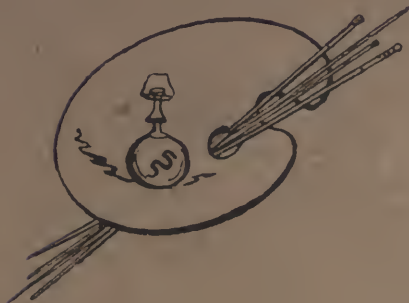


*JOHN LEECH.*

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

BY

FRED. G. KITTON.



LONDON:  
GEORGE REDWAY,  
12, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.



JOHN LEECH,  
ARTIST AND HUMOURIST.

## John Leech.

OBIT OCTOBER XXIX., MDCCCLXIV.

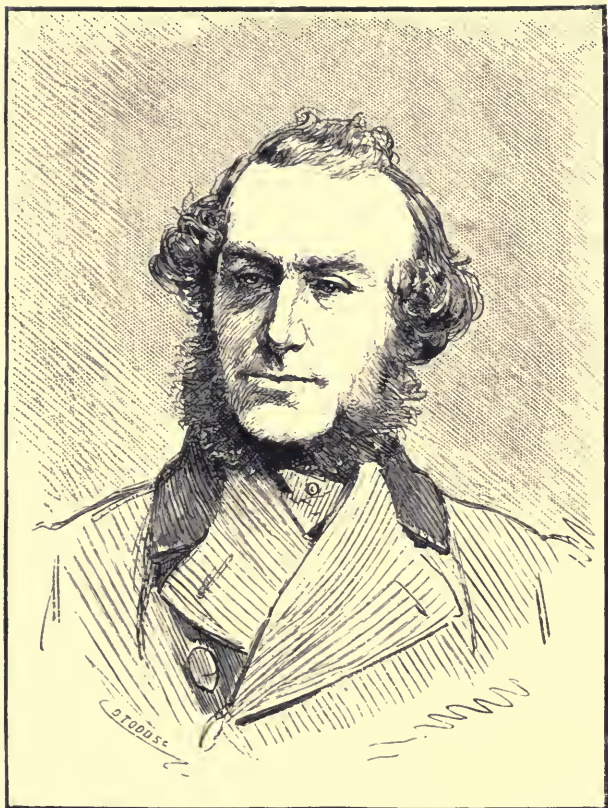
ÆTAT. 46.

THE simplest words are best where all words are vain. Ten days ago, a great artist, in the noon of life, and with his glorious mental faculties in full power, but with the shade of physical infirmity darkening upon him, took his accustomed place among friends who have this day held his pall. Some of them had been fellow-workers with him for a quarter of a century, others for fewer years; but to know him well was to love him dearly, and all in whose name these lines are written mourn as for a brother. His monument is in the volumes of which this is one sad leaf, and in a hundred works which, at this hour, few will not remember more easily than those who have just left his grave. While Society, whose every phase he has illustrated with a truth, a grace, and a tenderness heretofore unknown to satiric art, gladly and proudly takes charge of his fame, they, whose pride in the genius of a great associate was equalled by their affection for an attached friend, would leave on record that they have known no kindlier, more refined, or more generous nature than that of him who has been thus early called to his rest.

NOVEMBER THE FOURTH.







Yours Faithfully  
John Leech.

JOHN LEECH,

ARTIST AND HUMOURIST:

A Biographical Sketch.

BY

FRED. G. KITTON,

AUTHOR OF "PHIZ" (HABLÔT K. BROWNE), A MEMOIR.

LONDON:

GEORGE REDWAY,

12, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

MDCCLXXXIII.

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| 3. <i>Fac-simile</i> of Postal Envelope designed<br>by W. Mulready, R.A. . . . .   | " 16           |
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### NOTE.

The original sketches by Leech included in this list are selected from the collection now being exhibited in the Museum, South Kensington. They are reproduced by a photographic process, and printed in grey, so that they might be made to resemble, as closely as possible, the pencil medium in which the original designs were executed. By comparing the sixth illustration in the above list with that immediately succeeding it, the reader will be enabled to understand and appreciate the method by which the artist first conceived the design, and afterwards elaborated it into the finished picture.

For the portrait the author is indebted to Mr. T. Walter Wilson, who, with his well-known skill, has drawn for this *brochure* an admirable likeness of the Artist. To Mr. John Newton, of Liverpool, his thanks are also due for a photograph, here reproduced, of Leech's caricature design of the Mulready envelope—now very scarce.

The last plate in this book, drawn and engraved by the author expressly for the work, represents the graves of Leech and Thackeray. They are separated but by one tomb (that of the Cheel family), and are identical in character, the only distinguishing feature being the thick, clustering ivy that has entwined itself about the ironwork that surrounds the grave of Thackeray.

The illustrations from Charles Dickens's Christmas books are printed from electrotypes of the original blocks.

P R E F A C E.

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THE late Dr. JOHN BROWN, at the commencement of his admirable paper on JOHN LEECH, discourses humorously on the physiology and philosophy of laughter, and on the various ways in which it seizes upon and deals with mankind: how it excruciates some, causing them to look and yell as if caught in a trap; how others, whom laughter grips and rends, are made desperate, and commit havoc with the furniture. He then treats of the uses of laughter as a muscular exercise; of its drawing into action lazy muscles, supernumeraries, which get off easily under ordinary circumstances; how much good the convulsive succussion of the whole man does to his chylo-poietic and other viscera; how it laughs to scorn care and *malaise* of all kinds; how it makes you cry without sorrow, and ache every inch of you without wrong done to any one; how it clears the liver and enlivens the spleen, and makes the very cockles of the heart to tingle.

Who has been more successful than JOHN LEECH in producing such results as these, who more worthy of recognition for his genius as artist and humourist? Being fully cognizant of those powers which he possessed, that have provoked us to peals of laughter, and induced in us a fund of merriment, I have endeavoured, in these pages, to gather together the more important facts that went to make up his career as an artist and a man, together with several anecdotes, some of which have never previously been printed. It is somewhat strange that, although nearly twenty years have elapsed since the artist's death, no formal biography of him has ever been written. Excellent essays have appeared from time to time, in magazines and elsewhere, to which I acknowledge my indebtedness for many interesting

incidents contained in this book, but I think I may safely assert that the present humble attempt to do honour to the memory of a wonderfully gifted artist has resulted in the most comprehensive account of his life and works that has yet been published. I venture to hope, however, that the task which I have undertaken may eventually fall into abler hands than mine—that a much more worthy tribute may be paid, and greater justice done to the memory of the brightest and kindest artistic genius of our time.

FRED. G. KITTON.

25, PAULTONS SQUARE,

CHELSEA,

*February, 1883.*



## JOHN LEECH.

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THAT pain and sorrow are far in excess of the joys and pleasures in this world of ours is a saying no more trite than true; and strenuously to endeavour to alleviate the one, and thereby increase the other, should be the self-imposed duty of every right-minded individual. They who succeed in its accomplishment are the most welcome of the benefactors of our species. This true philanthropy may exhibit itself in many forms; but the most popular, perhaps, is that which it is made to assume by an artist whose comic creations provoke honest laughter, and a kindlier feeling towards the objects of our mirth.

The old school of caricaturists, in which the names of GILRAY, ROWLANDSON, WOODWARD, and BUNBURY are most prominent, was noted chiefly for the broad, and, in many cases, vulgar and obscene treatment of the subjects, chiefly political, which were held up to ridicule. CHARLES DICKENS has thus expressed himself with regard to this:—"If we turn back to a collection of the works of ROWLANDSON or GILRAY we shall find, in spite of the great humour displayed in many of them, that they are rendered wearisome and unpleasant by a vast amount of personal ugliness. Now, besides that it is a poor device to represent what is satirised as being necessarily ugly, which is but the resource of an angry child or a jealous woman, it serves no purpose but to produce a disagreeable result." As an example of this kind of satire he gives the following instance:—"There is no reason why the farmer's daughter in the old caricature who is squalling at the harpsichord (to the intense delight, by-the-by, of her worthy father, whom it is her duty to please) should be squab and hideous. The satire on the manner of her education,

if there be any in the thing at all, would be just as good if she were pretty. The average of farmers' daughters in England are not impossible lumps of fat. One is quite as likely to find a pretty girl in a farmhouse as to find an ugly one; and we think that the business of this style of art is with the pretty one. She is not only a pleasanter object, but we have more interest in her. We care more about what becomes of her and does not become of her." The later school of so-called caricaturists, in their mode of treating similar subjects, differed considerably from their predecessors, whose style of art, it must be allowed, was well suited to the age in which they lived. Its leading members were GEORGE CRUIKSHANK, the elder DOYLE (better known as H. B.), and poor SEYMOUR, whose premature decease, it may be remembered, occurred during the publication of the *Pickwick Papers*, which he was then illustrating. GEORGE CRUIKSHANK, who lived and worked during two generations, may be considered as a connecting link between the old school of caricaturists and the still later one as represented by "Phiz" (HABLÔT K. BROWNE), RICHARD DOYLE, and JOHN LEECH.

CRUIKSHANK, in his early days, delighted in those broad, and sometimes humorous, productions of GILRAY and ROWLANDSON, and, in fact, was chosen to succeed the former, and to execute a number of political squibs and broadsides which found great favour with political partisans and lovers of caricature. The assistance of his pencil was in great demand, and WILLIAM HONE found his services invaluable, and almost monopolised them. But CRUIKSHANK gradually fell off from this style of art, and, in its stead, produced work of a more serious, not to say artistic, nature, which was the beginning of a new era in the history of caricature. His illustrations to Fairy Tales, to the most important novels of AINSWORTH, and innumerable other works, have made for him an everlasting reputation.

HABLÔT K. BROWNE (better known as "Phiz"), a *confrère* of CRUIKSHANK as a book-illustrator, is immortalized in the works of DICKENS, which, with two or three exceptions, he entirely illustrated, as also those of LEVER, and some of AINSWORTH'S. RICHARD DOYLE'S pencil was frequently employed in illustrating books, of which probably the most familiar is the *Adventures of*

*Brown, Jones, and Robinson.* Those large folding plates in the *Cornhill Magazine*, in which are typified the various phases of society, are by his hand; and he frequently contributed designs to the pages of *Punch*; even the well-known design on the cover of that journal bears his signature of R. D., with a little bird perched on the top of the letters.

But the name of JOHN LEECH is more familiar to us in connection with *Punch* than that of any other member of its staff. He may fairly be credited with having placed on a thoroughly firm foundation that periodical, which of late years has exhibited so marked a decadence. Whenever our eyes encountered a design with the well-known signature attached of a bottle containing a wriggling leech, we could not restrain a burst of laughter in anticipation of the treat in store for us. The drawing almost always explained itself, but the printed matter below increased its ludicrous nature. Not that LEECH was always funny, or that he intended to be so, for some of his cartoons gave a text of a most serious import, and preached a sermon that reached every heart.

JOHN LEECH was born in London, on the Surrey side of the Thames, on the 29th August, 1817. His father, JOHN LEECH, was an Irishman, a man of fine culture, a profound Shakspearean scholar, and a thorough gentleman. He was the landlord of the London Coffee House, on Ludgate Hill, the most important at that time of the large City hotels. Unfortunately for him, fortunately for the world, he did not succeed in this vocation, and was obliged to retire from it. Happily for the world, because the son was stimulated to the exercise of the genius which has so enriched that world.

It is recorded that LEECH in his infancy had a sudden and most severe inflammatory attack, and only the skill of Sir CHARLES MANSFIELD CLARK and Dr. JAMES NICHOLLS, humanly speaking, brought him out of it. He used to resist the application of remedies suggested by these great physicians, and on one occasion, when he was to be bled by cupping, he baffled the whole domestic force brought against him, until, hearing of his mother's sorrowful disappointment, he jumped up and bade them *do it*.

JOHN LEECH, the elder, possessed some skill with the pencil, and from him, doubtless, the son inherited his talent. His

mother could claim consanguinity with the great scholar, and master of Trinity College, Cambridge, **RICHARD BENTLEY**. She noticed with a mother's instinct the extraordinary aptitude for drawing which her boy exhibited, and encouraged it. When he was only three years old he was discovered by **FLAXMAN**, who had called on his parents, seated on his mother's knee, drawing with much gravity. The sculptor pronounced his sketch to be wonderful, adding, "Do not let him be cramped with lessons in drawing; let his genius follow its own bent; he will astonish the world"—advice which was strictly followed. A few years later some more of the youthful artist's drawings were seen by the celebrated sculptor, who said, after a careful examination of them, "That boy must be an artist; he will be nothing else or less." This was said in full consciousness of what is involved in recommending such a career.

He was only seven when he went to Charterhouse, but "I thought," wrote his father, "that I was not wrong in sending him thus early, as **Dr. RUSSELL**, the head-master, had a son of the same age in the school, and **JOHN** was in the same form with him." This early departure from his home was, of course, a sore trial to his fond mother's heart. It had cost her many a pang to part with him; but as she was a lady of good sense, as well as of a gentle spirit, she resolved to abstain from visiting him at his boarding-house. She knew it was right that he should be left to take his chance with the others, and she had sufficient strength of mind not to sacrifice his future welfare to the indulgence of her own affection. See him, however, she would, but in such a way that the child should not see her. She therefore hired a room in one of the houses which commanded a view of the Carthusian playing-ground; and there she would sit behind a blind day after day, happy and content so that she could get a glimpse of her child. Sometimes she would see him strolling about with his arm round the neck of one of his little companions, as the manner of schoolboys is; sometimes he was playing and jumping about with childish glee; but still the mother kept her watch. Years afterwards **LEECH** showed to his friend, whose words are here quoted, the window at which she sat.

The boy was liked by every one at school for his good temper

and winning manner. Apparently, he took no part in athletic sports, such as cricket, hockey, &c., because his arm had been previously broken by a fall from his pony, and was for a long time weak in consequence; but he was always fond of sports and manly exercises, and preferred the lessons of ANGELO, the fencing-master, to those of Mr. BURGESS, the drawing-master, despite his early excellence with the pencil. He cared little or nothing about being distanced in the classical race, and was no hand at Latin verses, which he gave up in despair, *and always got done for him*. His stay of nine years at Charterhouse never brought him nearer to the top of the school than the fifth form—the forms being at that time counted downwards, not upwards, as now. He had as a fellow-pupil the famous WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY, with whom he formed a friendship that ripened day by day, and never ceased until death parted them. It is said that LEECH once had the intense happiness of hearing that when THACKERAY was asked to name his dearest friend he replied, after a few moments' thought, "JOHN LEECH."

At sixteen years of age LEECH left Charterhouse, in which he always retained a strong interest, frequently attending its festivities; and although there is no doubt that school-life at the time he was a student was rougher than it is now, especially for the younger boys, he never complained of any great hardships undergone during that part of his life. Among the advantages which he gained at the noble old school was a faculty which very well-informed persons are in the habit of stating is not to be invariably acquired in the great places of education—the power of writing excellent English. The point may not have attracted general notice, but the very happily-phrased inscriptions attached to so many of his cuts—inscriptions which fully explain all that the artist desired to say, and which would be spoiled by the addition or disturbance of a word—are among what the world would consider trifles, but which no true artist will regard as such. His numerous letters were also admirably written, full of point and humour, and frequently profusely illustrated.\*

Notwithstanding FLAXMAN's advice and suggestion that LEECH should follow the profession of artist, his father put

\* See Correspondence, pages 57 and 58.



him, when his school life was completed, to the medical profession at St. Bartholomew's, under Mr. STANLEY, the surgeon of the hospital, who soon discovered great excellence in the anatomical drawings executed by his young pupil.

Mr. LEECH, the elder, would have placed him with Sir GEORGE BALLINGALL, of Edinburgh, but the embarrassment of his affairs prevented such an arrangement.

LEECH soon became known among his fellow-students for his lifelike, keen, but always good-natured caricatures: he was for ever drawing. He never had any regular art lessons, but his medical studies furnished him with that knowledge of the structure and proportions of the human form which gives such reality to his drawings.

After a time he was placed under a Mr. WHITTLE, an eccentric medical practitioner residing at Hoxton, and subsequently under Dr. JOHN COCKLE, afterwards physician to the Royal Free Hospital. Mr. WHITTLE has been immortalised as Mr. Rawkins, whose eccentricities have been set forth by ALBERT SMITH, himself an incipient surgeon, in his *Adventures of Mr. Ledbury and his Friend Jack Johnson*, first published in *Bentley's Miscellany*. LEECH frequently referred to "Rawkins" as being the *fac-simile* of WHITTLE, and probably suggested the character to the author, whose description of the man, who was continually "an apothecary, gulling of simples," will not be devoid of interest.

"Mr. Rawkins," says Albert Smith, "was so extraordinary a person for a medical practitioner that had we only read of him instead of having known him we should at once have put him down as the far-fetched creation of an author's brain. He was about eight-and-thirty years old and of Herculean form, except his legs, which were small by comparison with the rest of his body. But he thought that he was modelled after the statues of antiquity; and, indeed, as respected his nose, which was broken, he was not far wrong in his idea—that feature having been rather damaged in some hospital skirmish when he was a student. His face was adorned with a luxuriant fringe of black whiskers, meeting under his chin, whilst his hair of the same hue was cut rather short about his head, and worn without the least regard to any particular style or direction. But it was his class of pursuits which made him so singular a character. Every available apartment in his house, not actually occupied by human beings, was appropriated to the conserving of innumerable rabbits, guinea-pigs, and ferrets. His areas were filled with poultry; birdcages hung at every window; and the whole of his roof had been converted into one enormous pigeon-trap, in which it was one of his most favourite occupations to sit on fine afternoons with a pipe and brandy-and-water, and catch his neighbours' birds. He had very little private practice: the butcher, baker, and tobacconist were his chief patients, and employed him more especially with the intention of working out their accounts. He derived his





principal income from the retail of his shop, his appointments of medical man to the police force and parish poor, and breeding fancy rabbits. These various avocations pretty well filled up his time; and, when at home, he passed his spare minutes in practising gymnastics—balancing himself upon one hand, laying hold of staples and keeping himself out at right angles to the wall, with other feats of strength, the acquisition of which he deemed necessary in enabling him to support the character of Hercules—his most favourite impersonation—with due effect.”

Although this picture of “Rawkins” may be somewhat exaggerated, there is truth enough in it to enable one to understand how long young JOHN LEECH should be attracted to him. Such a man would naturally be the hero of a schoolboy’s fancy, and the great exemplar in whose footsteps it would be glorious to follow. “Rawkins,” *alias* WHITTLE, did not, however, succeed in his profession, which is not surprising; for, we are told, the faith held in him by some of his lady-patients was not strengthened, when, on taking a walk, they were suddenly surrounded by a hurrying and shouting crowd, in the middle of which, as they escaped, they beheld their medical adviser in quaint attire running to pick up stones in his mouth. He eventually married a widowed landlady of the large public-house at the end of his street, to whom he had for some time been paying his addresses. He turned tapster, and his old pupils used to call upon him and patronise his beer, which he, in his shirtsleeves, drew for them. It is said that he was originally a Quaker, and that he died a missionary at the Antipodes.

About this time young LEECH’s liking for horses probably received its first development. A friend of his own age, Mr. CHARLES ADAMS, who was closely occupied in business during the day, was the happy owner of two horses, which it was his delight to drive, tandem fashion, during a large part of the night. LEECH was his constant companion in these curious excursions, to which we are, doubtless, indebted for the many clever bits of driving life, of visions of savage and sleepy toll-keepers, of strange lights in dark country roads, and of discomfited wayfarers suddenly charged by reckless charioteers, as depicted by the pencil of the artist. Once when he and some friends were representing, with great success, before His Majesty’s lieges, a select company of glee-singers, and were liberally rewarded with small coin and copper, “I crossed the street,” said LEECH, “to a very attentive listener, and held out my cap. But he

quietly produced a small fiddle from behind his back and silently pleaded exemption from my claims, on the score of 'being in the trade.' "

At St. Bartholomew's and elsewhere LEECH at this early period of his life made friendships, which he always prized, with ALBERT SMITH, PERCIVAL LEIGH (the author of the *Comic English Grammar*, *Pips' Diary*, &c.), and many others, some of whom still remember his attending, when fifteen years of age, the anatomical lectures of Mr. STANLEY, and his custom of making notes of the more remarkable faces of his fellow-pupils. The "Buccinator" was one of many sketches with which he amused his companions. Another which is well remembered is that of JACK REEVE as "Cupid" dancing on a sunflower. The earliest sketches of his which are still preserved belong to this period, and many of them were in the possession of his friend MARK LEMON, afterwards editor of *Punch*. They cover both sides of a sheet of paper, and have punning titles, after the manner of the woodcuts in which TOM HOOD played his pranks.

LEECH seems to have gradually given up his medical studies, and to have resolved to live by his art. Well, if he had persevered in them until he had become the founder of a new College of Surgeons, not he and all his coadjutors could have brought into sick-rooms and hospitals such comfort and refreshment as that one pencil has bestowed.

He was eighteen years of age when he published his first work, entitled *Etchings and Sketchings*, by A. Pen, Esq., which bore this characteristic motto, taken from the speech of Cardinal Wolsey:—

"That noble lady  
Or gentleman that is not freely merry,  
Is not my friend."

This little work, published at the price of "2s. plain, 3s. coloured," consisted of four quarto sheets,\* covered with clever sketches, slightly caricatured, of cabmen, policemen, street-musicians, donkeys, broken-down hacks, and many other oddities

\* It is thus described in the *Cornhill Magazine*, December, 1864. A writer in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, however, calls it a *quarto of four pages*. What is probably meant is a book, quarto size, having four leaves. It is now very scarce.



of London life. Most of these sketches, however, were very incomplete, and were mere suggestions of heads, of half-length and whole-length figures. About this time LEECH turned his attention to lithography, and by means of it got into circulation some political caricatures, which are not without merit. Their ability, however, is that of a man who had not yet found the secret of his power, and was compelled to accommodate himself to the standard of the printsellers. Having drawn his pictures upon a stone, he has been known to spend a weary day in carrying the heavy stone from publisher to publisher in search of a buyer. The feat which brought him into general notice was a successful caricature of what is known as the MULREADY envelope.\* On this envelope, which was designed by MULREADY, Britannia was represented in the act of despatching winged messengers with letters to all parts of the globe, and down the sides of the paper were groups of personages eagerly welcoming the despatches, a small space being left for the direction. It was published by the authorities in aid of the cheap postal system, but the exceedingly unbusiness-like character of the device, and certain hints afforded by the design, struck the young satirist, and he executed a caricature envelope, in which the original was so ludicrously parodied that, had it been less absurd as a practical affair, it could hardly have survived. The caricature, which was duly got up as a postal envelope, sold enormously, though, of course, but a small pecuniary reward came to the comparatively unknown artist, and it was not only largely bought, but largely used for letters by the irreverent. People asked who had done it. And when that question begins to be asked, the sail ceases to flap in the wind, and the spray begins to fly from the bows.

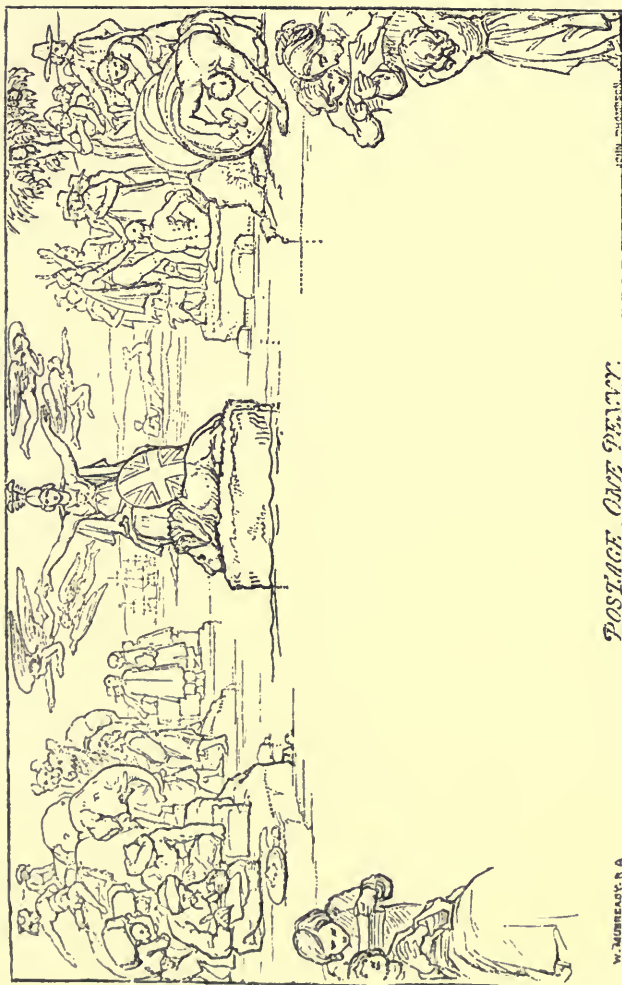
Shortly after young LEECH's maiden effort in publishing there appeared upon the scene a book which, from its birth down to the present day, has remained a favourite with the public. It was entitled *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*, and was published in monthly parts. The early illustrations were executed by SEYMOUR, who died by his own hand before many parts of the book had appeared. This sad occurrence created a vacancy for an illustrator, and LEECH, inspired and encouraged

\* See illustrations facing page 16.

by his recent artistic successes, applied for the post. But he was forestalled, as "Phiz" (HABLÔT KNIGHT BROWNE) and THACKERAY had competed for the honour, which was accorded to the former.

A great deal of LEECH's early work may be seen in the pages of *Bell's Life in London*, that well-known sporting newspaper, in which, some fifty years ago, were published a number of woodcuts by GEORGE CRUIKSHANK, KENNY MEADOWS, "Phiz," and SEYMOUR. Young LEECH also contributed similar designs, with the accompanying descriptions, some bearing the date of 1836. The most noticeable of such opening efforts were "The Boy's Own Series," "Studies from Nature," "Amateur Originals," and the "Ups and Downs of Life; or, the Vicissitudes of a Swell," in all of which LEECH's ease of style and happy seizure of character are readily recognised. It was when at work for *Bell's Life* that he first imbibed a taste for field sports, which developed into one of the strongest features in his pictorial career. He joined the hounds in Hertfordshire with Mr. PARRY and the "Puckeridge," and where, at one time, Mr. MILLAIS was his very companion, as his fellow-pupil in acquiring the rudiments of the chase.

Our artist then concocted schemes of drollery with his friends, and especially with Mr. PERCIVAL LEIGH, who had been his fellow-student at St. Bartholomew's. Thus it was a favourite idea of LEECH's to publish a *Comic Latin Grammar* as a freak, he contributing the illustrations, and Mr. LEIGH the text. This, as he proposed it, would have been a bit of fun consisting of a few pages, but ultimately, as published in 1840, it became a more elaborate burlesque. It was followed by a similar work, entitled the *Comic English Grammar*. The same pair, working in concert, then produced *The Children of the Mobility*, a parody on a then well-known work devoted to the serious glorification of our juvenile aristocracy. The work consisted of seven lithographs in a wrapper,—an important series dealing with the humorous and pathetic aspects of London street arabs, which were afterwards so often and so effectually to employ the artist's pencil. Amid all the squalor which these plates depict they are full of individual beauties in the delicate or touching expression of a face, in the graceful turn of a limb. The book is scarce in its original



POSTAGE ONE PENNY.

W. MURRAY, N. A.





*This Design Has*  
*(most respectfully of course)*  
*been submitted to Government*  
*by an aspiring Artist*  
*Submitted ready*

H. Mark





form, but, in 1875, reproductions of the outline sketches for the designs were published, a lithographic issue of the whole series,—and a finer photographic transcript of six of the subjects, which is more valuable than even the finished illustrations of 1841, in which the added light-and-shade is frequently spotty and ineffective, and the lining itself has not the freedom which we find in some of LEECH's other lithographs, notably in the *Fly-Leaves*, published at the *Punch* office.

In August, 1841, LEECH began work which he never quitted but with life. Three weeks before, the first number of *Punch* had appeared, and the artist was speedily secured for the new periodical, with which his name will always be associated. For twenty years he was its leading spirit, and, by his contributions to its pages, earned, from first to last, the sum of £40,000. Political cartoons he turned out by the score, and by the hundred his humorous "pictures of life and character," most of which have been republished in separate volumes. He availed himself of the opportunity thus afforded him of pointing at, in a pictorial sense, the social evils of that time, and also took it upon himself to hold up to ridicule the white-chokered boys who were wont to appear at parties many years ago, aping the look and manners of men; and he may be credited with having cleared the social field of those exceedingly precocious young gentry. His old schoolfellow, THACKERAY, hated "snobbery" with a true and particular hatred, and therefore we need not be surprised to find that when both the boys had developed into eminent men, and the author pronounced a verdict on the artist, he singled out for especial praise the sketches in which LEECH lampooned vulgar pretence. "No man," says the author of *Vanity Fair*, "has ever depicted the little snob with such delightful touch as LEECH. To remember one or two of these gents is to laugh." DICKENS, too, was a friend and admirer of LEECH, contending that in the art of caricature he, although conceding all due fame to the elder and stronger contemporary (GEORGE CRUIKSHANK), was the very first Englishman who had made beauty a part of his art; and held that, by striking out this course, and setting the successful example of always introducing into his most whimsical pieces some beautiful faces or agreeable forms, LEECH had done more than any other man of his generation



to refine a branch of art to which the facilities of steam-printing and wood-engraving were giving almost unrivalled diffusion and popularity. When the sketches of precocious youths appeared in 1841 in book form, entitled *The Rising Generation*, DICKENS complimented LEECH on its merits, and thus wrote concerning it:—

“We enter our protest against those of the Rising Generation who are precociously in love being made the subject of merriment by a pitiless and unsympathising world. We never saw a boy more distinctly in the right than the young gentleman kneeling on the chair to beg a lock of hair from his pretty cousin, to take back to school. Madness is in her apron, and Virgil, dog’s-eared and defaced, is in her ringlets. Doubts may suggest themselves of the perfect disinterestedness of the other young gentleman contemplating the fair girl at the piano—doubts engendered by his worldly allusion to ‘tin;’ although even that may have arisen in his modest consciousness of his own inability to support an establishment—but that he should be ‘deucedly inclined to go and cut that fellow out’ appears to us one of the most natural emotions of the human breast. The young gentleman with the dishevelled hair and clasped hands, who loves the transcendent beauty with the bouquet, and can’t be happy without her, is to us a withering and desolate spectacle. Who *could* be happy without her? . . . The growing youths are not less happily observed and agreeably depicted than grown women. The languid little creature who ‘hasn’t danced since he was quite a boy’ is perfect; and the eagerness of the small dancer whom he declines to receive for a partner at the hands of the glorious old lady of the house (the little feet quite ready for the first position, the whole heart projected into the quadrille, and the glance peeping timidly at the desired one out of a flutter of hope and doubt) is quite delightful to look at. The intellectual youth who awakens the tremendous wrath of a Norma of private life by considering woman an inferior animal is lecturing at the present moment, we understand, on the Concrete in connection with the Will. The legs of the young philosopher who considers Shakspeare an overrated man were seen by us dangling over the side of an omnibus last Tuesday. We have no acquaintance with the scowling young gentleman who is clear that ‘if his governor don’t like the way he goes on in, why he must have chambers and so much a week;’ but if he is not by this time in Van Dieman’s Land, he will certainly go to it through Newgate. We should exceedingly dislike to have personal property in a strong box, to live in the suburb of Camberwell, and to be in the relation of bachelor-uncle to that youth. . . . In all his designs, whatever Mr. Leech desires to do he does. His drawing seems to us charming; and the expression indicated, though by the simplest means, is exactly the natural expression, and is recognised as such immediately. Some forms of our existing life will never have a better chronicler. His wit is good-natured and always the wit of a gentleman. He has a becoming sense of responsibility and self-restraint; he delights in agreeable things; he imparts some pleasant air of his own to things not pleasant in themselves; he is suggestive and full of matter; and he is always improving. Into the tone as well as into the execution of what he does he has brought a certain elegance which is altogether new, without involving any compromise of what is true. Popular art in England has not had so rich an acquisition.”

The first number of *Punch* was issued on the 17th July, 1841, and LEECH’s first contribution to it appeared on the 7th August, in the fourth number. It seems to be the only con-

tribution of his pencil to the first half-yearly volume of *Punch*; nor did he contribute many designs to the second volume—apparently not more than half-a-dozen. The first sketch is entitled “Foreign Affairs,” and is a pretty accurate representation of such foreigners as may be seen any day in London. In it there are a considerable number of heads and faces of French and German scamps, such as take refuge in the great metropolis. The drawing was skilfully made, and the artist had forcibly delineated their knavish and grimy characteristics; lest this application of the lash, however, should seem British prejudice, the reader was warned by a foot-note that these “*affairs*” must not be considered as representatives of foreign *gentlemen*. In the centre of the page is a scroll bearing the title, and the now familiar signature of a wriggling leech in a bottle. What,



however, is most remarkable about the sketch is that it at once sent down the circulation of *Punch*. It is an odd thing to say that he, who afterwards became the most conspicuous and most attractive contributor to this print, should have damaged its sale on his first connection with it. The injury was effected in this wise:—The process had not then been discovered of dividing a wood-block into parts, and giving them to several hands to engrave simultaneously. The artist drew upon an entire block, which could not be taken to pieces, and only one engraver could work upon it at a time. Such blocks, therefore, if they were of considerable size, took a long time to cut; and LEECH's first drawing for *Punch*, as it filled a whole page, was not ready for publication on the appointed day. But the fact itself has its interest as suggesting one of the causes that conduced to

LEECH's great success. The perfecting of the art of the wood-engraver came in the very nick of time to help him on, by insuring that rapidity of publication which was to him a great encouragement, and to the public an inestimable boon. It insured freshness, and novelty. The whim or fashion of the day might be seen pictured by him even before the public began to notice it much in real life, and the droll story, that belonged to the froth and spray of the passing wave, had not time to become stale before it made matter for a sketch, and might be seen in *Punch's* Gallery.

In this connection it should be remembered that, if LEECH did great things for *Punch*, that periodical gave him a great opportunity, such as no artist before him had enjoyed, and which he alone was able to seize.

Newspaper art was an utter novelty, and he gave to that novelty the dignity, the grace, and the nameless attraction of genius. Week after week there flowed from his pencil an endless succession of scenes—now of high life, and now of low life; now of indoors, and now of the street and public place; now of the town, and now of the country; now of England, and now of foreign lands; now of summer, and now of winter; now of sunshine, and now of storm. He caught the very image of his time, and fixed it in his sketches with such a combined strength and delicacy that one knew not which most to admire in him, his innate sense of beauty or his firm adhesion to accuracy. In depicting interiors he would introduce the smallest details of dress and furniture, which many of us hardly notice. But he was even happier when he got out-of-doors, and led us into the country. What scenes he drew of the hunting-field, of deer-stalking among Highland hills, and of fishing in Highland glens!

He was an ardent lover of such sport himself, delighting in horses from his childhood, and frequently following the hounds. Well known to his friends was a certain little pocket-book in which he was always making notes. If he did not actually make notes, pencil in hand, still he was studying in other ways. When he went to enjoy a day's hunting, perhaps he would pick out some fox-hunter that took his fancy, and would keep behind him the whole day, watching all his attitudes in the saddle, and marking every item of his dress to the last button and button-hole. Thus we see how he obtained such correctness





of detail, and why there is such a look of nature in his drawings. He was ever at work, consciously and unconsciously ; and although many of his sketches are slight, and apparently executed without much effort, it must not be supposed that they involved no mental labour. All concentrated endeavour wears the mind, and it was well said by a painter to one who underrated the worth of a picture produced in a week, " You forget that I have spent my whole life in learning to paint that picture in so short a time." But LEECH's working was more rapid in appearance than it was in reality. He formed his ideas very quickly : he saw his way in a moment.

As an instance of this, Mr. SAMUEL LUCAS went to him once for a little sketch which he wanted as the initial-letter to a tale that was about to appear in *Once a Week*. It was the story of a clown who had to crack his jokes in a circus while his wife was in her dying agonies. She was a columbine who, standing on horseback, used to leap through hoops. On the occasion of one of her leaps she missed her footing, fell to the ground, and injured herself fatally. To illustrate this tale a sketch was wanted suggesting the initial I. Before Mr. LUCAS had ceased speaking the thing was done. " I think this is what you want," said LEECH, showing him the first draft of the finished drawing (afterwards published) of a skeleton clown holding up the usual circus-hoop, the paper which had been stretched over it having just been broken by the rider jumping through it, the break or tear thus caused forming the initial-letter required. The sketch is remarkable, not only for the instantaneousness with which the artist conceived the idea, but is also an indication of what he, who generally took a humorous view of life, could achieve in the direction of tragedy. When Mr. MARK LEMON came with the suggestion of a cartoon for *Punch* he was always struck with LEECH's rapidity of understanding. He would sometimes knock off one of his large cartoons in an hour or so, while the friendly editor chatted with him over a cigar.

It is interesting to learn how the subjects for the *Punch* cartoons were decided upon. Almost from the foundation of that journal it has been the habit of the contributors, every Wednesday, to dine together. In the winter months the dinner was usually held in the front room of the first-floor of No. 11,



Bouverie Street, Whitefriars—the business offices of the proprietors, Messrs. BRADBURY and EVANS. Sometimes these dinners were held at the Bedford Hotel, Covent Garden. During the summer months it was customary to have ten or twelve dinners at places in the neighbourhood of London, Greenwich, Richmond, Blackwall, &c. On these occasions the contents of the forthcoming number of *Punch* were discussed. When the cloth was removed, and dessert laid on the table, the first question put by the editor was, “What shall the cartoon be?” During the lifetime of JERROLD and THACKERAY the discussions after dinner ran very high owing to the constitutional antipathy existing between these two. JERROLD being the oldest, as well as the noisiest, generally came off victorious. It required all the suavity of MARK LEMON to calm the storm, his decision always being final. Papers were brought out, and the latest intelligence discussed, in order to bring the cartoon down to the latest date, and on the Thursday morning following, the editor called at the houses of the artists to see what was being done, and on Friday all copy was delivered and put into type.

At these dinners none but those connected with the staff proper were permitted to attend; the only occasional exceptions, we believe, have been Sir JOSEPH PAXTON, Mr. LAYARD, CHARLES DICKENS, Rev. REYNOLDS HOLE, and CHARLES DICKENS, junior.

The large cartoons in *Punch* may fairly be considered LEECH's most important work. Though the subjects of them were sufficiently personal, yet they were never coarsely or aggressively so, and he was sure to mix some touches of harmless humour and gentlemanly feeling with his castigations. His favourite method of treating official persons—statesmen, senators, and public characters in general—was to represent them as children, as naughty boys, or good boys, or boys with lessons to learn and school-work to get through. Some of the very best of the political cartoons of the day were those juvenile personations of LEECH's. Thus when Sir ROBERT PEEL resigned in 1846 he drew that inimitable design of Lord JOHN, in the character of “Buttons,” applying for the vacant situation, and the Queen replying, “I fear, JOHN, you are not strong enough for the place.” Another cartoon represents that boy BEN (DISRAELI), and the pedagogue asking what he is prepared to do next “half,” BEN replying,



with a saucy air, that he had "made arrangements to smash everything." Again in 1851, after Lord JOHN's ineffectual skirmish with the Roman Catholic party, the noble lord is humorously depicted as the naughty little boy who had chalked "No Popery" on the door, and then ran away. Earl RUSSELL has himself, in his "Recollections," spoken of this satire as a "fair hit." Occasionally it struck him that some familiar illustration in a book, such as "Oliver asking for more," suggested a political situation, and by placing other heads and faces on the figures he produced a cartoon by the new arrangement. The illustrations in the works of DICKENS frequently suggested to him such ideas, and the writer remembers to have seen "Mrs. Gamp and her bosom friend Betsy Prig," "The Election for Beadle," and several others treated in this way. These, and such as these, are typical examples of the guileless mirth and fun that for the most part qualified the artist's satire.

The portraits of the political parties in these cartoons were always excellent, for the caricaturist is something more than the mere portrait-painter, who produces his work after a few sittings, and with his model in a set position. In the same way that GILRAY observed the peculiarities of PITT and Fox, and BURKE and SHERIDAN, from his vantage-ground over Mrs. HUMPHREY's shop in St. James's Street, where he lodged, and caught his victims unawares, becoming familiar with every angle and every shade of expression of the public men who were his unconscious sitters—even so did LEECH snatch sittings from PEEL and PALMERSTON, Lord JOHN and WELLINGTON, and had thrust their portraits safely into his waistcoat-pocket, in that small note-book which he always carried. It is recorded that when it was proposed to cast a statue of Sir ROBERT PEEL, the portrait selected as most striking in its resemblance, most faithful to his natural expression, was found in a cartoon by JOHN LEECH, published in *Punch*, and that from this drawing the head was modelled.

On the other hand, when satire was not demanded, but social or national wrong called for grave censure, LEECH knew how to administer it, not only without giving unnecessary offence, but in the way best calculated to bring about reform and redress. When incendiarism was rife in the sister isle he treated it

rightly as a symptom, not of anarchy, but of despair. He drew the wretched cottier in his miserable hovel—the wife and mother, hunger-slain, lying dead on the bare pallet, and the famished babes crying to the bereaved father for bread. He sees them not, for his gaze is fixed on the poor dead mother; but he sees in his bewildered brain the fire-fiend waving his torch and beckoning him to vengeance on his oppressors. This picture alone, which appeared in 1845, should have given the artist a reputation.

But it was not the political, much less was it the tragic, aspects of society to which JOHN LEECH was to devote his talents. He was essentially a humourist, and as essentially a genial, frank-hearted gentleman. He found his proper vocation in depicting the social circles he frequented and the sports he loved, and there is hardly any class of London society which he has not comically reproduced. The medical student, the artist, the fast man and spendthrift, the well-to-do comfortable “cit,” the corporation magnate, the policeman, the cabdriver and his waterman, the carman, the coster, the poacher—all figure by turns in his pictures, and a hundred queer characters besides. Who has not laughed at the enterprise of the undaunted Mr. Briggs, the man who, undismayed by a thousand failures, scorned to succumb, but rode, and raced, and stalked the red deer, and hunted, and shot, and fished, and swam like a hero in the face of a world of disasters, such as the artist himself had experienced? Who among us cannot recall the varying scenes of Christmas revelry and fun which flowed from LEECH’s fancy as the season of merriment and hospitality came round, in which the frolicsome figures he drew so charmingly were grouped with such a comic effect, and always with a sympathy betraying the complicity of the artist in his own drolleries? When, as the season of summer waned, all London, as the common phrase goes, went out of town to the seaside, LEECH went with them, and what he saw there he told us from year to year in a series of drawings full of freshness and innocent mirth, while crowded with graceful groups of the fairest forms and faces of happy English girls. It was here, in the delineation of female beauty, that LEECH stood pre-eminent, excelling as much the artists of his own day as those of the past. He drew the features

of Englishwomen under every phase of emotion and with every variety of expression ; and, with fewer touches than any artist we know, he contrived to impart to them more of grace and loveliness than we often find in finished works of far greater pretension. Again, the faces of his children (including, of course, the infant in arms), while they necessarily present greater difficulties, are rendered with a fidelity quite unequalled, and at the same time, with a careless freedom of outline which makes one wonder that they should be so true to nature and fact. The peculiar humour of LEECH is nowhere more happily displayed than in his treatment of little children ; he must have loved them heartily and tenderly or he would never have made so much of them, or recommended them so strongly to the affections of others.\* A contributor to the columns of the *Times*, Oct. 31, 1864, has thus written :—

“A Christmas time without two dozen sketches by Leech, full of the most graceful and delicate humour, would be a strange Christmas indeed—a Christmas which might as well be without holly and mistletoe, dancing and good cheer. He always took great pains as Christmas drew nigh, and year by year seemed to surpass himself in delicacies of touch and in the charm of his humour. . . . His experiences of our social life—his pictures of balls, dinner-parties, mess-rooms, bachelors’ chambers, Rotten Row, gardens, parks, streets, watering-places, shooting parties, hunting fields, boating, fishing, and we know not what else, make up such a history of his time as to the future historian will be invaluable. The fashion of the day, the passion of the hour, is reflected on his page as in a photograph. And while we have thus in his sketches a curiously-complete history of certain phases of this Victorian era, we have also in them a picture and a chronicle of the artist’s own life. Any one, without having known Mr. Leech personally, can detect in these sketches the work of a keen-sighted, hearty sort of man, healthy and broad in his sympathies, full of fun, but still more charmed with grace and sensitive to beauty, fond of children, fond of dwelling on all youthful beauty, fond of beautiful dogs and horses, but, above all things, fond of truth and nature. In him the sense of the grotesque and the love of satire was never allowed to interfere with, much less to override his attraction to, what was beautiful and true. There never was a caricaturist who was so little of a caricaturist ; who could give the truth

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\* That such love for children did exist in Leech’s breast is sufficiently proved by the following anecdote, related by Ellen Clayton in *English Female Artists*:—Mrs. Emma Cooper, the well-known painter of birds and flowers, was, when a little child, much interested in drawing by seeing her father’s friend, John Leech, make his designs for *Punch*. He used often to stay at her uncle’s house when she was there, and, being one of the kindest and gentlest of men, was always very good to his youthful admirer. One day she had been endeavouring to draw a lady’s boot, and after trying a long time unsuccessfully, she asked Mr. Leech to do it for her. He drew one for her with almost a sweep of his pencil. This she very rashly cut out *tout de suite*, covered with silk, and converted it into a pincushion—an act of innocent Vandalism which she has never ceased to regret. He also drew for her another sketch, representing the immortal Sairey Gamp meeting a friend in the street. Fortunately she took care of this, and it remains a valued treasure.

of nature on so many different sides, and seemed at the same time to have so quick an eye for whatever is lovely in nature. He drew with equal ease a fine lady and a crossing-sweeper; on the same page he would bewitch the reader of *Punch* with the loveliest of little maidens, and provoke him with the vulgarest of upstarts. And he was always seeing and drawing something new. Suddenly we should be astonished with some sea-piece in which the billows were rendered with wonderful skill, or we had some mountain scenery, or a glade in a wood, or ploughed fields, or standing corn. He never stood still. When we wondered what would come next, we had some rare sky, some curious effect of light. And all this display of scenery was the mere background to views in which men, and women, and children were the chief objects of interest."

The letterpress descriptions in *Punch* will often recall the pictures to which they are appended, and raise a smile at the recollection. The holiday-schoolboy at the pastrycook's counter, who tells the saleswoman that he has had "two jellies, seven of them, and eleven of them, and six of those, and four bath-buns, a sausage-roll, ten almond cakes, and a bottle of ginger-beer;" the capital heads of the two swimmers at a watering-place, of which the lips of one say almost in the horror-stricken ear of the other, "I beg your parding, captain, but could you oblige me with my little account?"—are full of rollicking humour. Another sketch represents an admiring crowd of visitors to an exhibition, one of whom remarks, in reference to a statue of Venus de Medicis, "Why, that's the wery himmage of our Hemma!"—In July, 1846, is his own portrait, when the maid said to him, "If you please, sir, here's the printer's boy called again!"—In January, 1847, he has introduced himself as a performer on the clarionet, a member of the orchestra in "Mr. Punch's Fancy Ball." Other writers and artists of the *Punch* staff can be



recognised in this orchestral company. On the left is MAYHEW playing the cornet, then PERCIVAL LEIGH the double bass, GILBERT A'BECKETT the violin, DOYLE the clarionet, THACKERAY the piccolo, and TOM TAYLOR earnestly pegging away at the piano. The conductor of this goodly company is, of course,

MARK LEMON, the able *Punch* editor at that time, who is seen appealing to the fell JERROLD to moderate his bitter transports on the drum. Seven years later a different hand portrayed, in the same journal, all these and other contributors as boys at play. LEECH himself is riding his hobbyhorse, and, armed with a porte-crayon, is about to leap an easel set sideways to serve as a hurdle; JERROLD is playing skittles; THACKERAY has the bat in a small game of cricket; LEMON is playing rackets.

Thus, week after week and year after year, did the indefatigable artist contribute to *Punch* drawings both humorous and pathetic. Their number from first to last has been estimated at more than three thousand. When we take into consideration the number of books he illustrated in addition to this we can realise how unwearied was the brain that gave birth to so many creations, and with what unflagging industry the hand must have laboured that pictorially realised those creations. The year 1864, that of his decease, came and found him still "in harness," still at work as vigorously as ever, not robust, not rugged, but in seeming good health and spirits. To *Punch* for that year he had contributed eighty pictures, when, on the 5th of November, appeared an amusing cut. An Irishman, dreadfully maltreated in a street fight, is taken charge of by his wife, while a capitally-indicated group of the victor and his friends is seen in the distance, and two little Irish boys nearer. "Terence, ye great ummadawn," says the "wife of his bussum" to the vanquished hero, "what do yer git into this thrubble fur?" Says the hero in response, "D'ye call it thrubble now? Why, it's engyement." It is as good a thing as ever LEECH did—as good a cut as was ever in *Punch*. When he laid his pencil down beside this drawing it was never to take it up again, and six days before the appearance of the paper in which the cut was published, he had passed away.

As a natural consequence of the importance which his valuable services, both artistic and literary, assumed in connection with *Punch*, his income considerably improved. He was considered one of the most, if not the most, successful artist-humourists of the day, and his pencil was in constant request. Shortly before the birth of *Punch* he illustrated *The Porcelain Tower; or, Nine Stories*



of *China*, by T. T. T., a humorous work in which the pigtailed natives of that country play a conspicuous part. The book contains three etchings and fifteen woodcuts, the former being as good work with the needle as LEECH ever executed. He seemed, however, more in his element in wood-drawing, as it gave him greater scope for his vigorous style of handling, and undoubtedly his name is more intimately associated with that branch of art. In 1840, the Rev. T. BARHAM employed him to assist CRUIKSHANK with the illustrations to the *Ingoldsby Legends*, in their way equal to the *Legends* themselves, which is by no means slight praise. In 1844 appeared the *Comic Arithmetic*, a continuation of the parodies on the *English* and *Latin Grammars*. In the same year CHARLES DICKENS secured his services as illustrator of that admirable story the *Christmas Carol*, by far the best Christmas book that DICKENS wrote, and the only one illustrated exclusively by LEECH. In it there are four full-page etchings beautifully tinted, and several charming woodcuts drawn by the artist in his best manner.\* The first edition of this book as issued, in good condition, is very scarce and valuable. This was followed, in 1845, by the second of DICKENS's Christmas books, the *Chimes*, which was partly illustrated by LEECH, with whose name are associated those of D. MACLISE, R.A., R. DOYLE, and CLARKSON STANFIELD, R.A., as designers in its production.

The cuts, principally vignette, which appeared in these books, as also in the *Comic English* and *Latin Grammars*, 1840; in *Written Caricatures*, 1841; in HOOD's *Comic Annual*, 1842; and in ALBERT SMITH's *Wassail Bowl*, 1843, were excellently engraved by such skilled engravers as ORRIN SMITH, W. J. LINTON, &c., and were not, like the *Punch* illustrations, cut at speed by several engravers working simultaneously on the subdivided block. Among the other etchings of this period (1845) which deserve especial notice are those in *Young Master Troublesome*; or, *Master Jacky's Holidays*, and the frontispiece to *Hints on Life*; or, *How to Rise in Society*, a series of minute subjects, linked gracefully together by coils of smoke, illustrating the various ranks and conditions of men, one of them—the doctor by his patient's bedside—almost equalling, in vivacity and precision, the best of CRUIKSHANK's similar scenes.

\* See illustration facing page 12.







In 1845 LEECH illustrated *St. Giles and St. James* in DOUGLAS JERROLD'S *Shilling Magazine* with plates more vigorous and accomplished than those he did for *Bentley's Miscellany* in 1840. In 1846 appeared the *Battle of Life*, the third of DICKENS'S Christmas books. This was partly illustrated by LEECH, and we are told by the author how lamentably the artist failed in realising one of the principal features of the narrative.

In the illustration which closes the second part of the story, where the festivities to welcome the bridegroom at the top of the page contrast with the flight of the bride represented below,\* LEECH made the mistake of supposing that Michael Warden had taken part in the elopement, and introduced his figure with that of Marian. In justice to the artist, it should be stated, that the reader conjectures that such an elopement actually takes place, for both Michael Warden and Marian, whom he loves, disappear mysteriously the same night, and such a supposition holds good until the climax of the story, when the true circumstances of the case are explained by Marian. LEECH'S mistake was not discovered until too late for remedy, the publication of the book having been then delayed to the utmost limit expressly for these drawings; and it is highly characteristic of DICKENS, and of the true regard he had for the artist, that, knowing the pain he must give in such circumstances by objection or complaint, he preferred to pass it silently. Nobody made any remark upon it, and there the illustration stands; but any one who reads the tale carefully will at once perceive what havoc it makes of one of the most delicate turns in it. DICKENS himself thus wrote to FORSTER in reference to it:—

“When I first saw it, it was with a horror and agony not to be expressed. Of course I need not tell *you*, my dear fellow, Warden has no business in the elopement scene. *He* was never there! In the first hot sweat of this surprise and novelty I was going to implore the printing of that sheet to be stopped, and the figure taken out of the block. But when I thought of the pain this might give to our kind-hearted Leech, and what is such a monstrous enormity to me, as never having entered my brain, may not so present itself to others, I became more composed, though the fact is wonderful to me. No doubt a great number of copies will be printed by the time this reaches you, and therefore I shall take it for granted that it stands as it is. Leech otherwise is very good, and the illustrations altogether are by far the best that have been done for any of the Christmas books.”

In 1847 appeared GILBERT A'BECKETT'S *Comic History of England*, which was followed, in 1852, by the companion work,

\* See illustration facing page 28.

the *Comic History of Rome*. Both these volumes were profusely illustrated by LEECH, and contained several full-page etchings, beautifully tinted, and numerous woodcuts, all of a broadly humorous character, and which show some exquisitely graceful touches, as witness, in the latter volume, the fair faces that rise from the surging water in "Clælia and her companions escaping from the Etruscan Camp." The etched plates, and those in the *Christmas Carol*, are among the best of LEECH's work with needle and acid.

Our artist seems to have been busily employed during the following year, for, besides partly illustrating Mr. JOHN FORSTER's *Life and Adventures of Oliver Goldsmith*, he also designed and etched the plates for ALBERT SMITH's *Struggles and Adventures of Christopher Tadpole*, and, in conjunction with TENNIEL and others, CHARLES DICKENS's fourth Christmas book, the *Haunted Man, or the Ghost's Bargain*.\* In this year also was issued another series of twelve large lithographs, entitled *The Rising Generation*. These are, perhaps, inferior to the similar publication of seven years before (*The Children of the Mobility*), being less refined in drawing, less elevated in character, as works of art.

It is hinted by some that greater justice is done to LEECH's capabilities as an artist through the medium of lithography than that of wood-engraving. This is probably true, for both in lithography and etching the lines drawn by the artist were identically the same as those which appeared in print, whereas those drawn upon wood were *translated* by the engraver, who might sometimes fail in his appreciation of the dainty touches made by the pencil; indeed, there was constant complaint that his drawings on wood were spoiled by the wood-engravers, not necessarily that these last were unskilful, but that such subtle touches in the swiftly-drawn designs, were hard to preserve in hastily-cut blocks. LEECH is quoted as saying to a friend who was admiring a study in pencil:—"Wait till Saturday, and see how the engraver will have spoiled it."

In 1853, besides the illustrations to MAXWELL's *Fortunes of Hector O'Halloran*, appeared those of the first of a series of sporting novels by R. SURTEES, entitled *Mr. Sponge's Sporting*

\* See illustration facing page 46.

*Tour*, which contained tinted etchings (somewhat similar in treatment to the *Comic History of England* plates), and numerous woodcuts. The subjects of the plates were entirely sporting, and LEECH, being himself a sportsman, could enter fully into such scenes. The remaining books of this series, published at intervals of a year or two, were entitled *Handley Cross*, *Ask Mamma, or the Richest Commoner in England*, *Plain or Ringlets*, and *Mr. Facey Romford's Hounds*.

The first series of his *Pictures of Life and Character*, reprinted from *Punch*, appeared in 1854, and attracted considerable attention. It drew from THACKERAY'S pen, which was frequently enlisted in the praises of his old schoolfellow and constant friend, an admirable article published in the *Quarterly Review* at that time. He wrote:—

"This book is better than plumcake at Christmas. It is one enduring plumcake, which you may eat and which you may slice and deliver to your friends; and to which, having eat it, you may come again and welcome, from year's end to year's end. In the frontispiece you see Mr. Punch examining the pictures in his gallery—a portly, well-dressed, middle-aged respectable gentleman, in a white neckcloth and a polite evening costume—smiling in a very bland and agreeable manner upon one of his pleasant drawings, taken out of one of his handsome portfolios. Mr. Punch has very good reason to smile at the work and be satisfied with the artist. Mr. Leech, his chief contributor, and some kindred humourists, with peneil and pen have served Mr. Punch admirably. . . . There is no blinking the fact that in Mr. Punch's cabinet John Leech is the right-hand man. Fancy a number of *Punch* without Leech's pictures! What would you give for it? The learned gentlemen who write the work must feel that, without him, it were as well left alone. Look at the rivals whom the popularity of *Punch* has brought into the field; the direct imitators of Mr. Leech's manner—the artists with a manner of their own—how inferior their pencils are to his in humour, in depicting the public manners, in arresting and amusing the nation! The truth, the strength, the free vigour, the kind humour, the John Bull pluck and spirit of that hand are approached by no competitor. With what dexterity he draws a horse, a woman, a child! He feels them all, so to speak, like a man. What plump young beauties those are with which Mr. Punch's chief contributor supplies the old gentleman's pictorial harem! What famous thews and sinews Mr. Punch's horses have, and how Briggs, on the back of them, scampers across country! You see youth, strength, enjoyment, manliness in those drawings, and in none more so, to our thinking, than in the hundred pictures of children which this artist loves to design.\* Like a brave, hearty, good-natured Briton, he becomes quite soft and tender with the little creatures, pats gently their little golden heads, and watches with unfailing pleasure their ways, their sports, their jokes, laughter, caresses. *Enfans terribles* come home from Eton; young miss practising her first flirtation; poor little ragged Polly making dirt-pies in the gutter, or staggering under the weight of Jacky, her nurse-child, who is as big as herself—all these little ones, patrician and plebeian, meet with kindness from this kind heart, and are watched with curious nicety by this amiable observer. . . .

"Now, any one who looks over Mr. Leech's portfolio must see that the social

\* See illustration facing page 20.

pictures which he gives us are authentic. What comfortable little drawing-rooms and dining-rooms, what snug libraries we enter; what fine young gentlemanly wags they are, those beautiful little dandies who wake up gouty old grandpapa to ring the bell; who decline aunt's pudding and custards, saying that they will reserve themselves for an anchovy toast with the claret; who talk together behind ball-room doors—where Fred whispers Charley—pointing to a dear little partner seven years old—'My dear Charley, she has very much gone off; you should have seen that girl last season!' Look well at everything appertaining to the economy of the famous Mr. Briggs: how snug, quiet, appropriate all the appointments are! What a comfortable, neat, clean, middle-class house Briggs's is (in the Bayswater suburb of London, we should guess, from the sketches of the surrounding scenery)! What a good stable he has, with a loose box for those celebrated hunters which he rides! How pleasant, clean, and warm his breakfast-table looks! What a trim little maid brings in the topboots which horrify Mrs. B.! What a snug dressing-room he has, complete in all its appointments, and in which he appears trying on the delightful hunting-cap which Mrs. Briggs flings into the fire! How cosy all the Briggs party seem in their drawing-room, Briggs reading a treatise on dog-breaking by a lamp; mamma and grannie with their respective needleworks; the children clustering round a great book of prints—a great book of prints such as this before us, at this season, must make thousands of children happy by as many firesides! The inner life of all these people is represented. Leech draws them as naturally as Teniers depicts Dutch boors, or Morland pigs and stables. It is your house and mine; we are looking at everybody's family circle. Our boys coming from school give themselves such airs, the young scapegraces! our girls, going to parties, are so tricked out by fond mammas—a social history of London in the middle of the nineteenth century. As such future students—lucky they to have a book so pleasant—will regard these pages; even the mutations of fashion they may follow here if they be so inclined. Mr. Leech has as fine an eye for tailory and millinery as for horseflesh. How they change those cloaks and bonnets! How we have to pay milliners' bills from year to year! Where are those prodigious *châtelaines* of 1850 which no lady could be without? Where are those charming waistcoats, those 'stunning' waistcoats, which our young girls used to wear a few seasons back, and which cause 'Gus, in the sweet little sketch of 'La Mode,' to ask Ellen for her tailor's address? 'Gus is a young warrior by this time, very likely facing the enemy at Inkermann; and pretty Ellen, and that love of a sister of hers, are married and happy let us hope, superintending one of those delightful nursery scenes which our artist depicts with such tender humour. Fortunate artist, indeed! You see he must have been bred at a good public school; that he has ridden many a good horse in his day; paid, no doubt, out of his own pocket for the originals of some of those lovely caps and bonnets; and watched paternally the ways, smiles, frolics, and slumbers of his favourite little people.

"As you look at the drawings, secrets come out of them—private jokes, as it were, imparted to you by the author for your special delectation. How remarkably, for instance, has Mr. Leech observed the hairdressers of the present age! 'Mr. Tongs,' whom that hideous old bald woman, who ties on her bonnet at the glass, informs that 'she has used the whole bottle of Balm of California, but her hair comes off yet.' You can see the bear's grease not only on Tongs' head but on his hands, which he is clapping clamorously together! Remark him who is telling his client 'there is cholera in the hair;' and that lucky rogue whom that young lady bids to cut off 'a long thick piece'—for somebody, doubtless. All these men are different, and delightfully natural and absurd. Why should hairdressing be an absurd profession?

"The amateur will remark what an excellent part hands play in Mr. Leech's pieces: his admirable actors use them with perfect naturalness. Look at Betty, putting the urn down; at cook, laying her hands on the kitchen table, whilst her policeman grumbles at the cold meat. They are cooks' and house-



maids' hands without mistake, and not without a certain beauty too. The bald old lady, who is tying her bonnet at Tongs', has hands which you see are trembling. Watch the fingers of the two old harridans who are talking scandal: for what long years past they have pointed out holes in their neighbours' dresses and mud on their flounces! 'Here's a go! I've lost my diamond ring.' As the dustman utters this pathetic cry, and looks at his hand, you burst out laughing. These are among the little points of humour. One could indicate hundreds of such as one turns over the pleasant pages.

"There is a little snob or gent, whom we all of us know, who wears little tufts on his little chin, outrageous pins and pantaloons, smokes cigars on tobaccoists' counters, sucks his cane in the streets, struts about with Mrs. Snob and the baby (the latter an immense woman whom Snob nevertheless bullies), who is a favourite abomination of Leech, and pursued by that savage humourist into a thousand of his haunts. There he is, choosing waistcoats at the tailor's—such waistcoats! Yonder he is giving a shilling to the sweeper who calls him 'captain'; now he is offering a paletot to a huge giant who is going out in the rain. They don't know their own pictures, very likely; if they did, they would have a meeting, and thirty or forty of them would be deputed to thrash Mr. Leech. One feels a pity for the poor little bucks. . . .

"Just one word to point out to the unwary specially to note the backgrounds of landscapes in Leech's drawings—homely drawings of moor and wood and seashore and London street—the scenes of his little dramas. They are as excellently true to nature as the actors themselves; our respect for the genius and humour which invented both increases as we look and look again at the designs. May we have more of them; more pleasant Christmas volumes, over which we and our children can laugh together! Can we have too much of truth, and fun, and beauty, and kindness?"

One might almost suppose that the hint thus thrown out by the great novelist, at the conclusion of this splendid eulogium of the artistic capabilities of LEECH, was acted upon, for a few years afterwards (1858) a second series of these *Pictures of Life and Character* was issued, and a third two years later, in which, at intervals, appeared those wonderfully funny drawings of *Mr. Briggs and His Doings*, which were eventually published in separate form.

In 1858, LEECH refreshed himself with a tour in Ireland, and took with him as travelling companion his old friend, the Rev. REYNOLDS HOLE, afterwards Canon of Lincoln. The result of this trip was the publication, in 1859, of a volume entitled, *A Little Tour in Ireland, being a Visit to Dublin, Limerick, Killarney, Cork, &c. By an Oxonian*. The Oxonian was Mr. HOLE himself, who, at the artist's suggestion, wrote his impressions, and LEECH contributed the illustrations, which took the form of coloured folding plates and numerous woodcuts.

When I have included those amusing and clever coloured etchings that appeared, year by year, in *Punch's Pocket-Book*, the woodcut illustrations to *Once a Week* and the *Illustrated London News*, I shall have enumerated most, if not all, of the

artist's most important productions. Although the number of his book illustrations falls far short of that by the renowned GEORGE CRUIKSHANK (whose artistic career was spread over a period twice the length of LEECH's), and "Phiz," it must be remembered that LEECH devoted the greater portion of his time to the interests of *Punch*, to which he contributed some thousands of drawings, besides frequent literary compositions.

There must be connected with the career of such an artist and such a man incidents which cannot fail to interest, and one is naturally curious to learn something of the private "life and character" of him who has amused us for so many years.

Unlike his *confrère* in art, "Phiz" (who led the life of a semi-recluse), he mixed in society, and *good* society too. He made friends wherever he went, for who could fail to love and reverence the man, apart from his own estimable character, whose abilities had done so much to counteract the monotony of our existence by giving us, week after week, food for hearty and honest laughter? As a boy he gained by his good temper and winning manner the affection of his schoolfellows; as a student in St. Bartholomew's his society was coveted by all with whom he studied; as an artist, he induced a feeling of love and friendship for himself in the breasts of noble and gifted men with whom he came in contact. Among the latter may be included such men as MILLAIS, ELMORE, LANDSEER, and BOEHM, the popular Royal Academicians, CHARLES DICKENS, and his old schoolfellow THACKERAY, and, of course, MARK LEMON and his coadjutors in *Punch*.

JOHN LEECH was tall, strongly but delicately made, graceful, long-limbed, with a grave, handsome face, a sensitive, gentle mouth—but a mouth that could be "set,"—deep, penetrating eyes, an open, high, and broad forehead, finely modelled. He looked like his works—nimble, vigorous, and gentle; open, and yet reserved; seeing everything, saying not much; capable of heartiest mirth, but generally quiet. His friend Canon HOLE describes him as possessing "a slim, elegant figure, over six feet in height, with a grand head, on which Nature had written 'Gentleman,' with wonderful genius on his ample forehead, wonderful penetration, observation, humour in his blue-grey Irish eyes, and wonderful sweetness, sympathy, and mirth about



his lips, which seemed to speak in silence. He was, as we gardeners have it, 'rather short of foliage;' and a vacant space at the back of his head no doubt suggested his charming sketch of the *enfant terrible*, climbing up the visitor's chair, and proclaiming to his mamma that 'Mr. Boker has got a double forehead!'" CHARLES DICKENS, in a whimsical account of an amateur strolling excursion, in which CRUIKSHANK, LEECH, MARK LEMON, JOHN FORSTER, and the author himself took part, puts into the mouth of Mrs. Gamp the following description of the artist :—

"If you'll believe me, Mrs. Harris, I turns my head, and see the wery man (George Cruikshank) a-making pictures of me on his thumb-nail, at the winder! while another of 'em—a *tall, slim, melancolly gent, with dark hair and a bage vice*—looks over his shoulder, with his head o' one side as if he understood the subject, and coolly says, "I've draw'd her several times—in *Punch*," he says, too! The owdacious wretch!"

"Which I never touches, Mr. Wilson," I remarks out loud—I couldn't have helped it, Mrs. Harris, if you had took my life for it!—"which I never touches, Mr. Wilson, on account of the lemon!"

LEECH was singularly modest, both as a man and an artist. This came by nature, and was indicative of the harmony and sweetness of his existence; but, doubtless, the perpetual going to Nature, and drawing out of her fulness, kept him humble as well as made him rich, made him, what every man of sense and power must be, conscious of his own strength; but before the great mother he was simple and loving, attentive to her lessons as a child, for ever learning and doing.

He was an ardent angler and a good horseman, fond of studying as well as sharing in athletic sports, and, although not blessed with a remarkably strong physique, sustained by his energetic and nervous temperament a great deal of fatigue. As previously stated, when a student in St. Bartholomew's he frequently joined a fellow-student in nightly escapades through and about London on horseback, and would often, in after years, follow the hounds, his presence at the "Pytchley" being a recognised thing. It is said of him, that, notwithstanding his intimate knowledge of every detail of the huntsman's dress, even to the number of buttons on his coat, he invariably presented, in the hunting-field, an incongruous appearance with regard to his outfit. Either he would wear the wrong kind of boots, or would dispense with some detail which would be considered an unpar-

donable omission on the part of an enthusiast. This want of exactness in his attire is accounted for by his friends as an instance of his retiring disposition and unwillingness for prominence as a huntsman, well knowing his deficiencies in rough-riding, which resulted from nervousness. His sensitiveness to criticism thus prevented him from incurring it.

JOHN LEECH's consideration for others was patent wherever he went. The gentleness of his nature, too, was remarkable, as his steady abstinence from personality abundantly proves. His correspondence was large, and a perusal of it only shows how careful he must have been to have shunned the many traps that were laid for him to make him a partisan in personal quarrels. Some of the most wonderful suggestions were forwarded to him, but he had a most keen scent for everything in the shape of personality. He would sometimes boast of this, and often regretted the only exception he ever made to this determination. It took the form, as a *Punch* cartoon, of a sharp rebuke given to the old Duke of ATHOLL, who had forfeited the respect of the public by refusing to open his grounds to sightseers. In this cartoon, published in 1850, the Duke is represented as a dog in a manger, savage and glaring, while underneath is the inscription—"A Scotch Dog in the Manger." This was followed in the succeeding number by another cartoon representing a "scene from the burlesque recently performed at Glen Tilt :"—

"These are Clan Atholl warriors true,  
And, Saxons, I'm the reg'lar Doo."

Shortly after the publication of these cartoons, LEECH was touring on foot and alone in the neighbourhood of the Duke's estate, in close proximity to "the unprofaned heather of Glen Tilt, sacred to dukes and deer," when he met a gentleman on horseback attended by his groom, also mounted. LEECH was accosted by the former, who proved to be the Duke himself, who exclaimed—"Is it possible that I now behold JOHN LEECH?" With considerable hesitation an affirmative reply was given, and the artist, fearing some severe reproof for his recent pictorial rebuke, timidly began to explain that, owing to the lateness of the hour, he intended to stay one night at the principal inn in the village. To this, however, the Duke would not agree, but immediately ordered his groom to dismount and assist LEECH

into the saddle, and compelled the artist to return with him and accept his hospitality. LEECH was dumbfounded by this, as he thought, undeserved generosity, and the invitation being renewed with still greater warmth, he accepted it, and they proceeded on their way to the mansion. Arriving at a narrow and somewhat dangerous path skirting a precipice, the artist held back, and the Duke, observing this delay, gruffly ordered him to advance. "Now," thought LEECH, "he will have his revenge!" and having reached the spot where the Duke awaited him, the latter, in a spirit of fun, and wishing to aggravate these nervous symptoms, fiercely demanded if he was not the man who had recently maligned him in *Punch*. Poor LEECH felt confused, and, glancing at the giddy depths below him, a vision of his dear wife and children passed before his sight. The Duke saw at once the effect of his austerity, which extorted from the trembling artist a full confession. "Your Grace," said he, "there are few amongst us who have not committed some act during their lives which they for ever regret. I admit the fault, and have ever since grieved to think that I so far forgot myself as to give you the slightest pain." The Duke, having enjoyed his joke against his guest, and forgiven him, they proceeded on their way, and upon arriving at the Hall they dismounted, and directions were given to prepare dinner. In the meantime LEECH was shown into a dressing-room, and having completed his toilet, awaited the announcement of the meal. When two hours had elapsed, and he began to feel cold and hungry, it occurred to him that either his room was so remote that the sound of the gong could not reach him, or that he was purposely kept a prisoner by his revengeful host; so he ventured timidly to ring the bell, which was presently answered by a pompous servant in livery. "I am afraid," said LEECH, "that I did not hear the gong. Is dinner ready?" "Sir," said the servant, drawing himself up haughtily, "when dinner is ready you *will* hear the gong," and disappeared. Another hour elapsed, but still no sound. At length, getting impatient, he again rang the bell, and, the servant re-appearing, the same inquiry was made, and the same reply given. At ten o'clock, however, came the welcome sound like music to the ears of the famished guest, to whom, on his appearance at table, a full explanation of the unreasonable

delay was given by the noble host, whose custom it was, on his return from a day's hunting, to enjoy a nap undisturbed, which on this occasion was of unusual duration. Everything passed off well, and next day LEECH, with a lighter heart, proceeded on his journey, breathing more freely than he had done for many hours.—The artist related this anecdote of himself at a dinner given by his friend Mr. J. E. MILLAIS, who, in company with his other guests—amongst whom were Sir E. LANDSEER, W. M. THACKERAY, and Mr. J. E. BOEHM, the sculptor—enjoyed the exquisite manner in which it was told. His wonderful power of facial expression in representing the severity of the Duke's manner and his own timidity, provoked great laughter, but produced in the narrator nothing more than an occasional grave smile which gradually spread over and enlivened his handsome face.

After having been on *Punch* some little time, and his income having improved, he determined to migrate from an attic near Tottenham Court Road, where he then lived, into a house of his own at Notting Hill. Shortly after this he married. It is related that he first saw Mrs. LEECH, then Miss ANN EATON, walking in London, and, following her home, noted the number of the house, looked out the name, obtained an introduction, and married the lady. She was one of those English beauties whom he loved to draw, a very pleasant and amiable person—a devoted mother and wife. No one was more amused than she when LEECH “had just seen the most fascinating creature, most probably a ‘female marquis,’ with whom he was devotedly in love, and who, he had occasion to believe, was not indifferent,” &c., &c., &c. He had two children, a boy and girl. The former, JOHN GEORGE WARRINGTON LEECH, was in a double sense his son, for he was the main warmth and brightness of his life. And how the child returned his love! His ambition was to resemble his father in appearance and dress, even to the baldness, and he wore a little coat of velvet made exactly like that in which his father worked, and, at the age of five, would stand before a miniature easel painting the engravings of the *Illustrated London News* with an air of profound interest. Even then he had, like his father in his childhood, a marvellous notion of drawing. He was eventually drowned at South Adelaide in 1876.





LEECH's hospitality was very great, and it was extended with no idea that he had to discharge a social obligation, but with an evident pleasure of collecting round his table—at which the best taste presided—guests whose natures were most in accordance with his own. He aimed at no brilliance in conversation, and had always an extreme distaste of being *en évidence*, but no man could better discharge the graceful duties of a host, not merely in his capacity of giver of the feast, but in the equally important though often neglected office of promoting mental good cheer and evoking the social powers of his friends. Far too much of a gentleman to be a gourmand,—though he was wont to say that he felt as though he deserved a good dinner when he had done a hard day's work, and that as a matter of economy he was reluctantly compelled to eat and drink of the best lest he should injure his manipulation,—he seemed to think, nevertheless, that his guests were bound to be greedy, and that it was his duty to provide the material.

The late Mr. GEORGE HODDER, who, in 1848, was indebted to LEECH for a friendly intercession with the proprietors of *Bentley's Miscellany*, resulting in the publication in that periodical of a serial story by Mr. HODDER, illustrated by LEECH, thus wrote of the artist:—

“Among the many little domestic gatherings to which the meetings of the *Punch* contributors gave rise, none were more agreeable or more memorable than the dinner-parties at John Leech's house, first at Powis Place, and afterwards at Notting Hill and Kensington. In one notable instance within my recollection Leech had invited some ten or more gentlemen, consisting chiefly of his fellow-labourers in the establishment of *Punch*, to dine with him in Powis Place, and he had engaged for the occasion the services of an extra attendant whose ordinary occupation was not that of the traditional ‘green-grocer,’ but that of the parish clerk. The guests were assembled in the drawing-room, *selon le règle*, preparatory to the banquet, and it was at length observed that there was an unusual delay in announcing the dinner. This was all the more noticeable because John Leech's household arrangements were generally conducted upon the best principles of order and regularity, and the guests were one and all in such high intellectual vigour, and so well prepared to enjoy ‘the feast of reason and the flow of soul,’ that they began to fear they should exhaust their stock of mental ammunition in a succession of skirmishes before the evening's war began. Whether the parish clerk had disconcerted the cook by the solemnity of his presence, or whether the latter, being of a serious turn of mind, was afflicted with a tender sensation which upset her culinary calculations, it was never clearly ascertained, but there could be little doubt that there was something not quite right between the kitchen and the dining-room. After a somewhat significant pause, however, a solemn figure, attired in black, and wearing a white neckerchief of most orthodox character and proportions (in a clerical point of view), appeared in the room, and in a style of elocution which would have well befitted his calling in the church.



gave the welcome announcement, 'The dinner is on the table.' 'Amen!' cried the assembled guests with corresponding solemnity, and one and all descended to the dining-room, tittering at the comically doleful manner in which so important a preliminary to an enlivening entertainment had been carried into effect."

JOHN LEECH possessed among his many excellent qualities that of a fine bass voice, and the gentlemen of the *Punch* conclave well remember how often in the midst of their rejoicings he diverted their thoughts from the humorous to matters of more serious moment by singing "Barry Cornwall's" song, "King Death was a rare old fellow." On one occasion, when he had sung this song with more than his usual vigour, DOUGLAS JERROLD exclaimed, "I say, LEECH, if you had the same opportunity of exercising your voice as you have of using your pencil how it would *draw!*"

DICKENS, as we have remarked, was a constant admirer of the genius of LEECH, whom he numbered with his best friends. In 1845 the artist took part in an amateur theatrical performance instituted by DICKENS. Miss KELLY's Theatre (afterwards the "Royalty") was lent for the occasion, and the piece chosen was "Every Man in his Humour," LEECH playing the part of Master Matthew. DOUGLAS JERROLD, GILBERT A'BECKETT, MARK LEMON, and JOHN FORSTER also took part in the performance, the success of which exceeded all expectations, causing such a sensation in private circles that little else was talked of.

In 1848 Mr. and Mrs. LEECH stayed with DICKENS as his guest at Broadstairs, and in the following year at Brighton, where their landlord and his daughter went raving mad, and the lodgers were driven to seek shelter elsewhere. DICKENS humorously described, in a letter to his biographer, the excitement caused by this occurrence, "how LEECH and he flew to the doctor's rescue, and their wives pulling them back; how the M.D. fainted with fear; how three other M.D.'s came to his aid; with an atmosphere of Mrs. Gamps, strait-waistcoats, struggling friends and servants, surrounding the whole."

In 1849, while on a visit to DICKENS at Bonchurch, LEECH met with an accident when bathing. He was knocked over by a bad blow on the forehead from a great wave, which stunned and bruised him. He was put to bed, and had "twenty of his namesakes on his temples." The next day he became worse and suffered from congestion of the brain, and, being in excessive

pain, ice was put to his head continuously, and he was bled in the arms besides. A day or two after this, DICKENS, who was kindly attentive to his friend during his illness in sitting up all night with him, thus writes to FORSTER:—"My plans are all unsettled by LEECH's illness, as of course I do not like to leave this place while I can be of any service to him and his good little wife. Ever since I wrote to you he has been seriously worse, and again very heavily bled. The night before last he was in such an alarming state of restlessness, which nothing could relieve, that I proposed to Mrs. LEECH to try magnetism. Accordingly in the middle of the night I fell to, and, after a very fatiguing bout of it, put him to sleep for an hour and thirty-five minutes. A change came on in the sleep, and he is decidedly better. I talked to the astounded little Mrs. LEECH across him, when he was asleep, as if he had been a truss of hay." From that day LEECH slowly recovered.

In 1854 Mr. and Mrs. LEECH again visited DICKENS when staying at Boulogne. The artist said to his friend on his arrival there after a stormy passage, that, when he stepped from the boat, he was received by the congregated spectators with a distinct round of applause as by far the most intensely and unutterably miserable-looking object that had yet appeared. The laughter was tumultuous, and, as he expressed it, he wished his friends to know that he made an immense hit. In 1859 he accompanied his friend Canon HOLE on a tour through Ireland, and they made notes and sketches of every striking incident and picturesque effect that came before their notice. Canon HOLE thus pleasantly describes the holiday:—

"Ah me, how happy we were! Looking from the steamer at the calm phosphorescent waves (so thankful they were calm, for we were miserable mariners), or gliding along the rails, or riding in cars, or rowing in boats, listening to quaint carmen, oarsmen, and guides, talking and laughing in genial converse with each other, or silent in serene fruition of the exquisite scenery around—silent in perfect sympathy, one of the surest signs and one of the purest delights of a true friendship! . . . But in all our easy and placid enjoyment Leech never forgot his art. There was constantly a lovely bit of expression upon the face of Nature, animate or inanimate, or there was something which he had never been able to get quite right, or something which he wanted for a special purpose, or which could not fail to be useful, or which would illustrate our tour. Of course, I was intensely curious upon the latter point; but the memoranda which he made from time to time, as we agreed that this or that was worthy of delineation, were not instructive. Just a few lines, and dots, and curves. All that he wanted was there, none the less, and all the truth, as surely as in shorthand notes. Nothing absurd,

abnormal, incongruous, in any way ridiculous, ever escaped him, I need hardly say; and a touch of his elbow, or a turn of his thumb, drew my attention continually to something amusing in the aspect or the remarks of those about us, at the *table d'hôte*, on the steamer, or the public car, which else in my obtuseness I had never relished. On rare, very rare, occasions it was my privilege to tell or to show him something which took his fancy, and he would say, in a tone which told you at once that he really thought he was asking you a favour, 'May I make use of that?' Then would I draw myself up as a monarch upon his throne, and, extending my arms in royal clemency, would make reply, 'You may.'

Thus passed the pleasant days of that *Little Tour in Ireland* which his truthful, charming sketches afterwards made so justly popular. These illustrations were not numerous, but with them, as with all his work, he took anxious pains. He went a second time over the Channel, and across Ireland to Galway, that he might finish to his satisfaction that wonderful picture of the Claddagh which makes the frontispiece of the book.

JOHN LEECH was a faithful attendant at the weekly council dinner, at which were discussed the topics to be treated in *Punch*. These he thoroughly enjoyed; and his suggestions, not merely as to pictorial matters, but generally, were among the most valuable that were offered, as may be inferred from his large knowledge of the world, his keen sense of the ludicrous, and his hatred of injustice or cruelty. His happy instinct often solved a troublous problem, or added new force to the projectile that was being forged. Even at these meetings, where a number of men of independent opinions, and united, on those occasions at least, chiefly in a representative sense, use some plainness of speech, JOHN LEECH was never provoked into angry discussion, and no word dropped by him ever rankled in the mind of a colleague. This is something to say when speaking of more than twenty years of the little parliament.

GEORGE HODDER tells us that :—

"In these *Punch* times it was the habit of Albert Smith to call him (Leech) familiarly and brusquely 'Jack,' while his still more intimate friend, Percival Leigh, addressed him as 'John' or 'Leech,' and this was so repugnant to Jerrold's tastes and feelings, that he at length exploded with the following pertinent query: 'Leech, how long is it necessary for a man to know you before he can call you "Jack?"' No reply; but, if my recollection serves me, 'Jack' was sounded in our ears much less frequently on subsequent occasions."

The same writer also relates the following incidents :—

"The leading members of the club were anxious, at a particular period, which I cannot call to mind with sufficient accuracy to be relied upon, to insure on a given evening an exceptionally large attendance; and I, as the

honorary secretary, addressed a letter to John Leech, amongst others, requesting his presence. In reply he sent me the following note, with no signature; but in its stead a grotesque figure, such as my artistic skill is just advanced enough to enable me to copy:—

“ ‘Powis Place.

“ ‘MY DEAR GEORGE,

“ ‘I have an appointment with Sir Robert Peel\* to-morrow at about three o'clock; but I daresay I shall be able to get away in time to join you at the dinner. Indeed, I may say I *will* come.

“ ‘Yours faithfully,



“ ‘G. Hodder, Esq., S.R.P.C.’ ”

“ John Leech used to tell an amusing anecdote of Sir Henry Webb, whose tall military figure and aristocratic head were at one time as familiar in the stalls of the theatre, especially on ‘first nights,’ as were the rubicund countenances of Lord Adolphus Fitzclarence and the late Sir George Wombwell in the omnibus-box at the Italian Opera House, in the Haymarket. Some one had informed Sir Henry that a terrible murder had just taken place in the metropolis, and that the culprit had not yet been apprehended. Sir Henry appeared, or affected to be, deeply interested in the matter, and at once proceeded to make inquiries, his deep, heavy voice giving due solemnity to the questions he put. ‘Dear me! another murder?’ he exclaimed; ‘and what sort of murder?’ Answer—‘A poor girl shot by her sweetheart!’ ‘Dear me! dear me!’ said the distressed gentleman. ‘Girl shot by her sweetheart. Dreadful! dreadful! And when did it take place?’ Answer—‘Yesterday morning.’ Sir Henry—‘God bless me! Yesterday morning! Is it possible?’ Answer—‘True; the girl was murdered yesterday morning, and by a fellow who was supposed to be her lover.’ Sir Henry—‘Dear me! dear me! very shocking indeed! And at what time yesterday morning?’ Answer—‘Between six and seven o’clock.’ Sir Henry—‘Gracious goodness! Between six and seven o’clock! What an early hour! Very awful! very awful! And what was the cause of the murder?’ Answer—‘Jealousy.’ Sir Henry—‘Jealousy! Heaven defend us! Horrible indeed! Jealousy! And what was the girl’s name?’ Answer—‘Martha Jones.’ Sir Henry—‘Dear me! dear me! Martha Jones! More and more shocking! And the murderer, what was his name?’ Answer—‘Philip Brown.’ Sir Henry—‘Philip Brown! God bless me! Philip Brown! this is bad indeed! Well, well, well! Martha Jones shot by Philip Brown! And where was the murder committed?’ Answer—‘In Rosamond Street, Clerkenwell.’ Sir Henry—‘Great heavens! In Rosamond Street, Clerkenwell! *Then we must bear it as well as we can!*’ The locality was too much for his weak nerves; but Sir Henry partook of a grand supper immediately afterwards, and on the following morning he had forgotten all about poor Martha Jones and Rosamond Street, Clerkenwell.”

As to LEECH’S method of practising his art, all his friends knew the never-failing little note-book, which contained wealth of sketches, of expressive bits of composition, effect, and humour, such as the artist met in his walks and visits. Did an odd or

\* This was intended as a jest, of course. Sir Robert Peel was then Prime Minister.

characteristic face pass him by, out would come the little book as soon as he was unobserved, and its pages recorded the impression of the observer with extraordinary facility and felicity. To this practice, doubtless, the artist owed his wonderful success. A writer in *Notes and Queries* relates how LEECH and he were once riding to town together in an omnibus, when an elderly gentleman, in a very peculiar dress, and with very marked features, stepped into the vehicle, and sat down immediately in front of them. They were the only passengers. The new arrival stared so hard and made such a wry face at his fellow-travellers that they could hardly refrain from laughter. LEECH suddenly exclaimed to his companion, "By the way, did 'Prendergast' ever show you that extraordinary account which has been lately forwarded to him?" and, producing his note-book, added, "Just run your eye up that column and tell me what you can make of it." The page was *blank*; but two minutes afterwards the features of that strange old gentleman gaping at us were reflected with lifelike fidelity upon it.

On another occasion he was seen to strike off with equal promptitude and skill the scene of a quarrel between some dirty little urchins in a suburban village. These and similar sketches served "to fill up," as he said, his more formal labours, and often suggested themes, or were used as occasion required, and the fertile memory of the artist brought them forth.

He was a singularly rapid and indefatigable worker. Canon HOLE says, when he was his guest, "I have known him send off from my house three finished drawings on the wood, designed, traced, and rectified, without much effort as it seemed, between breakfast and dinner." The best technical qualities of his art, his unerring precision, his unfailing vivacity in the use of the line, are seen most clearly in the first sketches for his woodcuts, and in the more finished drawings made on tracing-paper from these first outlines, before the chiaroscuro was added, and the designs were transcribed by the engraver.\* Turning to the mental qualities of his art-work, it would be a mistaken criticism which ranked him as a comic draughtsman. Like HOGARTH he

\* Had the blocks been carefully and thoughtfully engraved by one hand, and then been printed by the hand instead of the steam-press, justice would have been done to the *finesse* and beauty which his drawings showed *before* they were "cut away."



was a true humourist, a student of human life, though he observed humanity mainly in its whimsical aspects—

“Hitting all he saw with shafts,  
With gentle satire, kin to charity,  
That harmed not.”

Of all art-satirists none have such a pervading sense and power of girlish and ripe womanly beauty as LEECH. There is a genuine domesticity about his scenes that could only come from a man who was much at his own fireside. What he draws he has seen. What he asks you to live in and laugh at and with, he has laughed at and lived in.

With all the temptations he had to club life, he never went to the Garrick to spend the evenings except on the Saturdays, which he never missed. On Sunday afternoons, in summer, THACKERAY and he might often be seen regaling themselves with their fellow-creatures in the Zoological Gardens, and making their own queer observations, to which, doubtless, we are indebted for our baby hippopotamus and many other four-footed jokes. He never would go to houses where he was asked only to be seen and trotted out. He had an instinctive dislike to personal publicity, even to seeing portraits of himself exposed in shop-windows, and often rejected the applications of photographic artists; but several admirable likenesses of him were executed, including one in water-colour by his friend Mr. J. E. MILLAIS, exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1855, and a statuette of considerable merit by the celebrated sculptor, Mr. J. E. BOEHM, R.A., also exhibited in the Academy.

The latter artist, who was intimately acquainted with LEECH, related to me the following incident in support of the fact that LEECH's desire to be an *historical painter* was paramount. One day the artists visited a gallery wherein was exhibited a picture of unusually large dimensions, by PILOTI, a Munich painter, in which was represented NERO contemplating the ruins of Rome, and standing, with folded arms, gazing upon the havoc he had made. This painting was not a great success, as the attitude of the Emperor was theatrical, and the colouring harsh and raw. LEECH, having examined the picture at some length, suddenly turned to his companion and exclaimed, “If I could only paint like that——” His friend laughed at the supposed sarcasm, but



to his astonishment LEECH meant it seriously, and showed in his face how pained he was at his friend's levity and want of appreciation.

In 1862, our artist appealed to the public with a very successful exhibition, in the Egyptian Hall, of "Sketches in Oil," the subjects of which were reproduced from the most remarkable of his *Punch* drawings. The origin of these sketches is curious. LEECH had often been asked to undertake works of this character, but he had for so many years been accustomed to draw with the pencil, and that only on small blocks, that he had little confidence in his ability to draw on a large scale. The idea originated with Mr. MARK LEMON, his friend and colleague, who saw that by a new invention—a beautiful piece of machinery—the impression of a block in *Punch*, being first taken on a sheet of indiarubber, was enlarged; when, by a lithographic process, the copy thus obtained could be transferred to the stone, and impressions printed on a large sheet of canvas. Having thus obtained an outline groundwork consisting of his own lines enlarged some eight times the area of the original block, LEECH proceeded to colour these. His knowledge of the manipulation of oil-colours was very slight, and it was under the guidance of his friend, Mr. MILLAIS, that his first attempts were made, and crude enough they were. He used a kind of transparent colour which allowed the coarse lines of the enlargement to show through, so that the production presented the appearance of indifferent lithographs, slightly tinted. In a short time, however, he obtained great mastery over oil-colour, and instead of allowing the thick fatty lines of printers'-ink to remain on the canvas, he, by the use of turpentine, removed the ink, particularly with regard to the lines of the face and figure. These he re-drew with his own hand in a fine and delicate manner, and added a daintiness of finish, particularly in flesh colour, which greatly enhanced the value and beauty of his later works. He, nevertheless, had some difficulty in reproducing in these enlargements that delicacy of touch and exactness in drawing which were conspicuous in the originals, and would labour all day at a detail, such as a hand in a certain position, before satisfying himself. A friend who was present during one of these difficulties recounted to me how LEECH refused the offer he





made him to pose as a model, as he said it would increase rather than lessen the difficulty. It is remarkable that LEECH for this reason never *studied* from the living model, a fact rendered more interesting as a coincidence, for "Phiz" experienced similar difficulties, and offered similar objections.

These oil sketches, when completed and on exhibition, afforded the public the first opportunity of being brought face to face with the actual work of LEECH's hand. They gave the artist greater scope than usual for the development of that strong feeling for the picturesque which those who have summed up LEECH's claim to the title of artist must certainly (even from a study from his small drawings) have put to his credit.

As is well known, this exhibition took London captive. It was the most extraordinary record, by drawing, of the manners and customs and dress of a people ever produced. It was filled "from morn till dewy eve," and always full of mirth; at times, indeed, like a theatre where all are convulsed with laughter by the *vis comica* of one man. The guffaws of special, often family groups, broke out opposite each drawing, spread contagiously effervescing throughout, welling and waxing again and again like waves of the sea. From his reserve, pride, and nicety, LEECH could never be induced to go when any one was in the room, having an especial horror of being what he called "caught and talked at by enthusiastic people."

One day a sporting nobleman visited the gallery with his huntsman, whose naïve and knowing criticisms greatly amused his master. At last, coming to one of LEECH's favourite hunting pictures, he said, "Ah! my lord, nothin' but a party as knows 'osses cud have draw'd them 'ere 'unters."

As an instance of LEECH's honesty and modesty, nothing could induce him to do what was wanted, call them *paintings*! "They are mere sketches," he said, "and very crude sketches too, and I have no wish to be made a laughing-stock by calling them what they are not." He went further than this, in having printed in the catalogue the following words:—"These sketches have no claim to be regarded or tested as finished pictures. It is impossible for any one to know the fact better than I do. They have no pretensions to a higher name than that I have given them—*Sketches in Oil*."

THACKERAY again lent his valuable aid in support of his friend's talents, and wrote an article in the *Times* (June 21, 1862) relative to this exhibition, which rendered it still more popular, and so delighted LEECH that he rejoiced like a child, and said, "That's like putting £1,000 in my pocket."

The author of *Vanity Fair* thus wrote:—

"The outdoor sketcher will not fail to remark the excellent fidelity with which Mr. Leech draws the backgrounds of his little pictures. The homely landscape, the sea, the winter wood by which the huntsmen ride, the light and clouds, the birds floating overhead, are indicated by a few strokes which show the artist's untiring watchfulness and love of Nature. He is a natural truth-teller, as Hogarth was before him, and indulges in as many flights of fancy. He speaks his mind out quite honestly, like a thorough Briton. He loves horses, dogs, river and field sports. He loves home and children—that you can see. He holds Frenchmen in light esteem. A bloated 'Mosoo' walking Leicester Square, with a huge cigar and a little hat, with 'billard' and 'estaminet' written on his flaccid face, is a favourite study with him; the unshaven jowl, the waist tied with a string, the boots which pad the Quadrant pavement, this dingy and disreputable being exercises a fascination over Mr. Punch's favourite artist. We trace, too, in his work a prejudice against the Hebrew nation, against the natives of an island much celebrated for its verdure and its wrongs; these are lamentable prejudices indeed, but what man is without his own? No man has ever depicted the little 'snob' with such a delightful touch. Leech fondles and daudles this creature as he does the children. To remember one or two of these dear gents is to laugh. To watch them looking at their own portraits in this pleasant gallery will be no small part of the exhibition; and as we can all go and see our neighbours caricatured here, it is just possible that our neighbours may find some smart likenesses of *their* neighbours in these brilliant, lifelike, good-natured sketches in oil."

The exhibition was such a splendid success that it is said to have brought in nearly £5,000.

LEECH had a melancholy in his nature, especially in his latter years, when the strain of incessant production made his fine organisation supersensitive and apprehensive of coming evil. Lord Ossington, then Speaker, once met LEECH on the rail, and expressed to him the hope that he enjoyed in his work some of the gratification which it brought to others. The answer was, "I seem to myself to be a man who has undertaken to walk a thousand miles in a thousand hours." "Work, work, work" (as his friend HOOD sang), new projects, new applications, daily! The brain busy when the hand was unoccupied; the mind abstracted and employed when the man was supposed to be taking holiday—even when at his meals. He began frequently to complain of habitual weariness and sleeplessness, and was advised to rest and try change of air. In 1862 he acted

upon this suggestion, and, accompanied by his old friend MARK LEMON, proceeded on a short tour to Paris, and from thence to Biarritz.

"That Leech's pencil was not idle on this holiday," says Shirley Brooks, "two well-known pictures will testify. One of them is a general view of that now-famous watering-place, with specimens of some of its curious frequenters. The other is a very remarkable drawing. It represents a bull-fight as seen by a decent Christian gentleman, and, for the first time since the 'brutal fray' was invented, the cold-blooded barbarity and stupidity of the show is depicted without any of the flash and flattery with which it has pleased artists to treat the atrocious scene. That grim indictment of a nation professing to be civilised will be on record for many a day after the offence shall have ceased.

"This brief visit," continues Mr. Brooks, "to the Continent was his last but one. His strength did not increase, and he no longer found pleasure in hunting, of which he had been exceedingly fond, and later he discontinued riding on horseback. He was then not merely advised but ordered to travel. About this time the great man who had been to him as a brother, the school-mate of his boyhood, the chief friend of his manhood, Thackeray, died. He told Millais of his presentiment, that he also should die suddenly and soon. In the summer of 1864 he went to Hamburg, accompanied by his friend Alfred Elmore; and afterwards he sojourned at Schwalbach. His mind was amused if his body was not strengthened by these visits to new scenery, and his sketch-book was soon filled with memorials, some of which he embodied in his last large *Punch* engraving—a view of the place where the residents at Schwalbach meet to drink the waters, and with figures of illustrious political people.

"Soon after his return he resolved to try what pure fresh English air would do for him, and, accompanied by his family, he went to Whitby. Several friends were also staying there at the same time, and he wrote to London that he liked the place. In September, on his writing to me that he would prolong his stay if I and my wife would come down, we went, and remained at Whitby until he left it on the 3rd of October. The scenery round Whitby is varied, and some of it is exceedingly fine; and Leech, when we could induce him to leave the painting in oil, to which he devoted far too many hours, enjoyed the drives into the wild moors, and up and down the terrible but picturesque roads; and he was still more delighted with the rich woods, deep glades, and glorious views around Mulgrave Castle. I hoped that good was being done; but it was very hard to stir him from his pictures, of which he declared that he must finish a great number by Christmas. It was not for want of earnest and affectionate remonstrance, close by his side, nor for lack of such remonstrance being seconded by myself and others, that he persevered in over-labour at these paintings, which he had undertaken with his usual generosity, in order to enable himself to provide a very large sum of money for the benefit of his relatives, not of his own household. It need hardly be said that he was never pressed for work by his old friend the editor of *Punch*. His contributions to that periodical had not exceeded one half-page engraving each week, for a long time, until he volunteered to compose the large Schwalbach picture. Let me note another instance of his kindness, shown to utter strangers. A deputation from the Whitby Institute waited upon him to ask him to attend a meeting and to speak in promotion of the interests of the association. He was, on that day, too ill to bear an interview with more than one of the gentlemen, and was, of course, compelled to refuse their request. But it occurred to him that they might think his refusal ungracious (as I am sure they could not), and he sent for all his *Sketches of Character* from London, and presented them to the institute."



His incessant brainwork induced a peculiar irritability, with which most persons have a tendency to jest rather than sympathise. He was much affected by noise, and was literally driven from his house in Brunswick Square by street music. He removed to Kensington, where he hoped to obtain a release from this annoyance by adopting a device of double windows; but he had no peace, and, in addition to the torment of the organs, he came to be afflicted at early dawn by the hammer of a mechanic. His friends made light of it, and tried to jest with him. "You may laugh," he would say, "but I assure you it will kill me." He often introduced in the pages of *Punch* the barrel-organ nuisance, as in the instance of a cartoon entitled "Foreign Enlistment," in which he has represented some sturdy "grinders" as having "taken the shilling," and underneath is the sentence, "If we must have it (*i.e.*, foreign enlistment), for goodness' sake begin with the organ-men." Again, towards the close of 1843, he drew a picture with this legend:—"Wanted, by an aged lady, of a nervous temperament, a professor who will undertake to mesmerise all the organs in her street. Salary, so much per organ." Again, in a large folding coloured plate, in *The Follies of the Year*, entitled "The Quiet Street, a Sketch from a Study Window," he has introduced innumerable organs and German bands.—Looking at these designs, and knowing the artist's susceptibilities, we can fully comprehend what mental suffering he must have endured from such causes. It should here be stated that, at this time, Mr. Bass proposed to bring a bill into Parliament relating to street music. Amongst a number of letters which he received from various [sources wishing him success was one from MARK LEMON, which follows:—

"Punch Office, 85, Fleet Street,  
23rd May, 1864.

"SIR,

"I venture upon what might possibly be considered as impertinence, were not the subject of my note of public interest.

"I am so regularly interested in the success of your measure for the regulation of street music that I am desirous of strengthening your hands by putting you in possession of some facts within my knowledge. I formerly lived in Gordon Street, Gordon Square, but was compelled to quit London to escape the distressing consequences of street music, although Gordon Street was comparatively a quiet locality. A dear friend of mine, and one to whom the public has been indebted for more than twenty years for weekly supplies of innocent amusement, and whose name will find a place in the future history of art, has not been so fortunate. He lived in Brunswick Square, and remained there until the nervous system was so seriously affected by the continual disturbance to which he was subjected while at work, that he was compelled to abandon





a most desirable home, and seek a retreat at Kensington. After expending considerable sums to make his present residence convenient for his art-work—placing double windows to the front of his house, &c.—he is again driven from his home by the continual visitation of street-bands and organ-grinders. The effect upon his health—produced, upon my honour, by the causes I have named—is so serious that he is forbidden to take horse exercise, or indulge in fast walking, as a palpitation of the heart has been produced—a form of *angina pectoris*, I believe—and his friends are most anxiously concerned for his safety.

“He is ordered to Homburg, and I know that the expatriation will entail a loss of nearly £50 a week upon him just at present.

“I am sure I need not withhold from you the name of this poor gentleman. It is Mr. John Leech.

“If those gentlemen who laugh at complaints such as this letter contains were to know what are the natural penalties of constant brain-work, they would not encourage or defend such unnecessary inflictions as street music entails upon some of the benefactors of their age. Such men are the last to interfere with the enjoyments of their poorer fellow-labourers; but they claim to be allowed to pursue their callings in peace, and to have the comfort of their homes secured to them. All they ask is to have the same immunity from the annoyances of street music as the rest of the community have from dustmen’s bells, post-horns, and other unnecessary disturbances. The objection to street noises is not a matter of taste. It involves the progress of honest labour and the avoidance of great mental affliction.

“Apologising for the liberty I have taken,

“Believe me, yours faithfully,

“M. T. Bass, Esq., M.P.”

“MARK LEMON.

Upon LEECH’s return to his London home, in the autumn of 1864, although in better health, he was still strangely susceptible to noise, and spoke with more than his usual earnestness, with something even of passionate entreaty in his tones, about the sufferings which the street-organs gave him, and about the smallness of the sympathy which he received from people who have to work their brains in a mere routine.

Although the malady, known in English as breast-pang, from which he suffered, is a very dangerous one, and is said to destroy life by causing spasm of the heart; and although it was necessary to warn LEECH against all excitement—as riding, quick walking, and overwork—it was not supposed that he was in immediate danger; and if he could only find rest and freedom from anxiety, great hopes were entertained of his recovery. Notwithstanding that in his weak state of health he was easily upset, his generous disposition had let him undertake responsibilities which wore him down.

At last the brave heart broke. “Please God, Annie, I’ll make a fortune for us yet,” he said to his wife on the morning of the 29th of October, 1864; and, a few hours afterwards, that same

voice whispered into the same loving ear, "I am going." The last agony of that terrible breast-pang killed him, as he fell into his father's arms.

Four days before the end came he dined at the usual meeting of the *Punch* staff, and there stated—there was no need to tell it—that he was exceedingly ill. His voice was heard for the last time at that board. The day before his death he visited Dr. QUAIN, who assured him that his only chance was in rest; and on returning home he sent away the last note he ever wrote; it was in pencil, and addressed to his old friend Mr. FREDERICK EVANS. In this he mentioned his interview with the eminent medical man, and added that he hoped to complete a cut, for which a messenger was to be sent, but that he was not sure of being able to do so. The messenger was despatched in obedience to his desire, but returned empty-handed. A sketch and an incomplete but most graceful drawing on the wood, are left to show that he had been "in harness" to the last. Another note, received on the following day, and in another hand than his, was the first real warning that danger was apprehended; and it made friends hasten to Kensington, where the tidings, though saddening, were far from hopeless. In the parlour beside his hall were assembled some little girls, friends of his children, and one of those parties with which he loved to make children happy was in progress. He had been compelled to retire to bed, and sent down to his visitors a kind message of regret that he could not see them, and they left with the intention of calling the following day, little thinking that his course was nearly run.

A few hours before he fainted away he asked Mr. HUTCHINSON's permission to work at some drawing (probably that mentioned above)—an unfinished sketch of a lady and dog—but it was given him only on the express understanding that it would be an amusement to him. Three hours afterwards, no physician being near him—Dr. QUAIN being out of town, and his other medical friends having left him to rest—his pain returned to him, and in the anguish of it he died. His pain came to him almost while he was in the act of catering for our entertainment, and he who has done more than, perhaps, any of his contemporaries, not even excepting DICKENS (for no art of words can

in this respect keep pace with that of the pencil), to amuse the present generation, died in agonies which he said were too great to be endured. The news of his death rang through London with a dismal shock—for in what home was not JOHN LEECH an inmate? His personal friends were deeply grieved when they knew their loss, none more so than DICKENS himself, who, in a letter to FORSTER, a few days afterwards, said, “I have not done my number (*Our Mutual Friend*). This death of poor LEECH has put me out woefully.”

The beautiful words used by THACKERAY in a letter to a friend who mourned the loss of a brother, and equally applicable here, could not be more fittingly quoted than at the close of this memoir :—

“The ghastly struggle over, who would pity any one who departs? It is the survivors one commiserates in the case of such a good, pious, tender-hearted man as he seemed, whom God Almighty has just called back to Himself. He appeared to me to have all the sweet domestic virtues which make the pang of parting only the more cruel to those who are left behind, but that loss—what a gain to him! A just man summoned by God, for what purpose can he go but to meet the Divine love and goodness? I never think about deploring such; and as you and I send for our children, meaning them only love and kindness, how much more *Pater Noster*?”

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We end as we began, by being thankful for our gift of laughter, and for our makers of the same, for the pleasant joke, for the mirth that heals and heartens, and never wounds, that assuages and diverts. This, like all else, is a gift from the Supreme Giver—to be used and not abused—to be kept in its proper place, neither despised nor estimated and cultivated overmuch; for it has its perils as well as its pleasures, and it is not always, as in this case, on the side of truth and virtue, modesty and sense. If you wish to know from a master of the art what are the dangers of giving oneself too much up to the comic view of things, how it demoralises the whole man, read SYDNEY SMITH's two lectures, in which there is something quite pathetic in the earnestness with which he speaks of the snares and degradations that mere wit, comicality, and waggery bring upon the best of men. We end with his concluding words :—

“I have talked of the *danger* of wit and humour: I do not mean by that to enter into commonplace declamation against faculties because they are dangerous—wit is dangerous, eloquence is dangerous, a talent for observation is dangerous, *everything* is dangerous that has efficacy and vigour for its characteristics; nothing is safe but mediocrity. The business is, in conducting the understanding well, to risk something; to aim at uniting things that are



commonly incompatible. The meaning of an extraordinary man is that he is *eight* men, not *one* man; that he has as much wit as if he had no sense, and as much sense as if he had no wit; that his conduct is as judicious as if he were the dullest of human beings, and his imagination as brilliant as if he were irretrievably ruined. But when wit is combined with sense and information; when it is softened by benevolence and restrained by strong principle; when it is in the hands of a man who can use it and despise it, who can be witty and something much *better* than witty, who loves honour, justice, decency, good-nature, morality, and religion ten thousand times better than wit—wit is *then* a beautiful and delightful part of our nature. There is no more interesting spectacle than to see the effects of wit upon the different characters of men; than to observe it expanding caution, relaxing dignity, unfreezing coldness—teaching age, and care, and pain, to smile—extorting reluctant gleams of pleasure from melancholy, and charming even the pangs of grief. It is pleasant to observe how it penetrates through the coldness and awkwardness of society, gradually bringing men nearer together, and, like the combined force of wine and oil, giving every man a glad heart and a shining countenance. *Genuine and innocent wit and humour like this is surely the flavour of the mind! Man could direct his ways by plain reason and support his life by tasteless food, but God has given us wit, and flavour, and brightness, and laughter, and perfumes to enliven the days of man's pilgrimage, and to 'charm his pained steps over the burning marle.'*”

\* \* \* \* \*

The funeral of JOHN LEECH took place on the 4th of November. On the morning of the day previous an advertisement appeared in the daily papers, in which the friends of the deceased artist, who were desirous of being in attendance, were informed that the *cortège* would “leave his late residence, No. 6, The Terrace, Kensington, at noon, to-morrow, the 4th inst., arriving at the Kensal Green Cemetery at half-past one o'clock precisely.” So many of his personal friends were anxious to join the procession to the grave, that it was considered necessary to issue and present tickets to the favoured ones.

The morning of the 4th was a bright and cheerful one, as the sad *cortège* started on its melancholy journey. Many carriages and a larger concourse of mourning friends than is common on such occasions attended his body to the cemetery chapel, and, as they passed along, there was a marked and unusual manifestation of sympathy on the part of the tenants of the thoroughfares through which they proceeded. It was as if the latter knew that a great artistic genius had ceased to exist, and were deeply interested in the tribute which his friends and admirers were thus paying to his cherished memory. There was no mistaking the sentiment of those who lined the roads or thronged the paths up to the cemetery chapel. The hearse used on the occasion was the same that conveyed the remains of DOUGLAS JERROLD to the grave. When the service in the chapel was

concluded, the coffin (which bore on each side an escutcheon with the initials J. L.) was carried to its last resting-place, the pall-bearers being—MARK LEMON, SHIRLEY BROOKS, TOM TAYLOR, J. E. MILLAIS, R.A., HORACE MAYHEW, F. M. EVANS (BRADBURY and EVANS, of *Punch*), JOHN TENNIEL, F. C. BURNAND, SAMUEL LUCAS, and HENRY SILVER. These were followed by JOHN LEECH, the late artist's father, Dr. QUAIN, who attended him during his illness, CHARLES KEENE, GEORGE DU MAURIER, and many others all more or less associated with LEECH in his relation to *Punch*. Among the crowd were CHARLES DICKENS, W. H. RUSSELL, PERCIVAL LEIGH, EDMUND YATES, GERMAN REED, H. K. BROWNE ("Phiz"), W. P. FRITH, R.A., T. LANDSEER, GEORGE CRUIKSHANK, GODFREY TURNER, CRESWICK the tragedian, RICHARD DOYLE, MARCUS STONE, W. BRUNTON, GEORGE HODDER, J. PHILLIP, R.A., &c., &c.

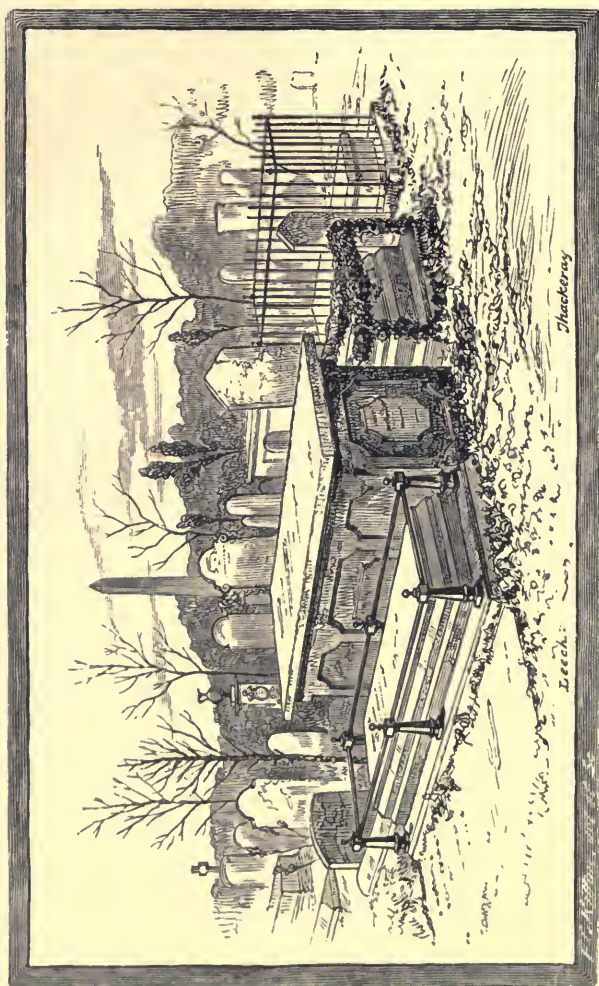
In addition to the mourners, each of whom wore an armlet of black crape, with the letters J. L. in silver on a rosette, about a hundred other people were admitted by the police before they closed the doors. Amongst these the scarlet uniforms of two life-guardsmen shone out conspicuously amid the mass of black wherein they were imbedded, and again recalled the numberless graceful fancies wherewith the departed artist irradiated our common London life.

The burial service was conducted at the grave by his cherished friend, the Rev. S. R. HOLE, whose voice faltered during the recital of the beautiful and touching passages contained in it; then the immortelles, which each pall-bearer had brought with him from the chapel, were cast reverently upon the coffin. Around the grave—divided but by one tomb from the place where the remains of THACKERAY had been so lately interred—stood, in tears which none thought of restraining or concealing, such an assemblage as rarely indeed gathers to honour the dead. How many who looked down into that deep grave recalled the familiar charm of their life, which they owed to the cunning of that practised hand, which lay there still and motionless! How many, above the average even of a popular man's friends, bewailed the fatal numbness of that manly and tender heart!

"For Lycidas was dead, dead ere his prime,  
Young Lycidas, and had not left his peer:  
Who would not sing for Lycidas?"

Who would not rather mourn when a spirit so gentle and graceful had passed away, and even its mortal frame had gone from our sight for ever?

To leave behind us a gentle memory—to hold, even as with the marble grasp of death, the strong though tender threads of a living love that shall stay awhile in the warm hearts of men and women—is a happiness to which we may at times look forward, in the midst of weary toil, as to the sweetest recompense that blesses the last long sleep. It is in mitigation of the many penalties entailed by genius on its possessors that they know on quitting this life they will be long remembered, long thought of with regret. Eyes that had never known his living form and features were wet at the funeral of JOHN LEECH.





## CORRESPONDENCE.

THE following characteristic letters, hitherto unpublished, were addressed by JOHN LEECH to JOHN FORSTER, the biographer of Dickens, and are preserved in the Forster Bequest, South Kensington Museum.

10, Brook Green,  
Thursday, November 12th.

MY DEAR FORSTER,

I fully intended calling upon you yesterday, but I could not get to town until after the hours you mentioned. To-day I must attack *Punch* work, which is (with me) all in a heap, and I have such a violent cold in the head that I think I am better at work in my room than out of doors. I have so much to get through between this and Christmas that I cannot afford to be ill. You may rely upon it I will lose no time about Dickens's book, and if I am well enough I will come to town on Saturday, when I will take my chance of seeing you. In the meantime,

Believe me, yours faithfully,

John Forster, Esq.

JOHN LEECH.

Monday, November 16, 1846.

MY DEAR FORSTER,

I really cannot say off-hand how many illustrations I can make within the week; indeed, I assure you I feel so embarrassed by the conditions under which I am to make my share of the drawings that I hardly know what to do at all. *Conscientiously* I could not make Clemency Newcome particularly beautiful. If you will read a little *beyond* the words "plump and cheerful," you will find the following:—"But the extraordinary homeliness of her gait and manner would have superseded any face in the world." "To say that she had two left legs and somebody else's arms, and that all four limbs seemed to be out of joint, and to start from perfectly wrong places," &c., &c. Again, she is described as having "a prodigious pair of self-willed shoes," and a gown of "the most hideous pattern procurable for money." The impression made upon me by such a description as I have quoted is certainly that the character so described is both awkward and comic. Of course I may be wrong in my conception of what Dickens intended, but I imagine the lady in question to be a sort of clean "Slowboy."

The blessed public (if they consider the matter at all) will hold me responsible with what appears with my name; they will know nothing about my being obliged to conform to



Mr. Maclise's idea. I cannot tell you how loth I should be to cause any delay or difficulty in the production of the book,\* or what pain it would give me to cause either Dickens or yourself any annoyance. I confess I am a little out of heart.

Believe me ever, yours faithfully,  
 John Forster, Esq. JOHN LEECH.

Brook Green,  
 November 18th, 1846.

MY DEAR FORSTER,

Perhaps I was wrong in using the word "conditions" in my note to you—I should have said "circumstances"—and by being "embarrassed" by them, I meant that I found it very harassing to do work (that I am for several reasons anxious to do well) under the constant feeling that I have too little time to do it in, and also I meant to convey to you that the necessity (which I certainly supposed to exist) of preserving a sort of resemblance to the characters as conceived by Mr. Maclise made it a rather nervous undertaking for me. It seems that I expressed myself rather clumsily, as the tone of my note appeared to you anything but what I intended it to be—any suggestion from you I should always consider most valuable. I send you one drawing, completed this morning at four o'clock, and I assure you I would spare neither time nor any personal comfort to show my personal regard for both yourself and Dickens.

I should not like to promise more than two other drawings if Saturday is positively the last day. I might be able to do more, but I should not like to promise, and fail. Pray overlook any glaring defects in the block I send, and

Believe me, ever, yours faithfully,  
 John Forster, Esq. JOHN LEECH.  
 &c. &c.

P.S. I should like, if there is no objection, that Linton should engrave for me.

Brook Green, Hammersmith,  
 Friday.

MY DEAR FORSTER,

I shall calculate upon the pleasure of your company to dinner on Monday next at five o'clock unless I hear from you to the contrary. Dickens, I think, understood that he was expected. If you do not come with him, you had better bear in mind that our house—or rather *box*—is "eligibly situate" opposite some almshouses at the corner of Cornwall Road, the Brook Green end. Our predecessor was pleased to call it Gelert House. To prevent mis-

\* Charles Dickens's *Battle of Life*.

takes I subjoin a representation thereof. I hope nothing will prevent your coming.

Until I see you, and afterwards,

Believe me, yours faithfully,

John Forster, Esq.  
&c. &c.

JOHN LEECH.



31, Notting Hill Terrace.

MY DEAR FORSTER,

I found your note here last night on my return from the country, where I contrived to catch so bad a cold that I cannot very well come out to see you, but if you could manage (the weather being fine) to come so far into the country, we might "transact business," and I should besides be most delighted to see you. I would show you that wonderful baby you have heard so much of, and which (as Jerrold says) is now visible to the naked eye. I am concerned much at the terrible bloodshed in Paris, but I assure you, however appearances may be against me, I have nothing to do with it.

Should you be unable to come here, will you write to me about the matter you wish to see me upon—for I am afraid that I may not see you to-morrow night at The Kelly's—seeing that I shall be obliged to take physic to-night, and may be, for divers reasons, confined to the house. Mrs. Leech desires to be kindly remembered to you. Believe me, my dear Forster,

Yours faithfully,

JOHN LEECH.

31, Notting Hill Terrace.

MY DEAR FORSTER,

Should not this be one *Coloured Engraving*? I never can do a hundred engravings in each number. I can't indeed!

Ever yours faithfully,

JOHN LEECH.

(Pasted on a blank page in this letter is an advertisement (printed in the *Examiner*, 1852) stating that the "first number of *Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour* is now ready, with illustrations by JOHN LEECH. The book will consist of twelve monthly shilling parts, each number containing a hundred engravings, and numerous woodcuts." (A curious misprint!)

January 1st, 1852.

MY DEAR FORSTER,

The first portion of that *magnum opus* which will contain twelve hundred large, highly-coloured engravings, besides two million woodcuts, has appeared. Of the extraordinary genius and skill developed in the pictorial department I need not speak, but to the singular merit of the literary part I would direct your especial attention. Seriously, my dear Forster, if you can (conscientiously, of course) say a cheering word about that periodical, it would be an act of friendship, and fully appreciated by me.

I am,

Yours very faithfully,

John Forster, Esq.

JOHN LEECH.

32, Brunswick Square,  
Nov. 24th, 1854.

MY DEAR FORSTER,

I have been wishing much to call upon you, but I have been so closely at work for some time past that I have been only able to snatch a quarter of an hour or so between whiles, and then at unreasonable times for paying visits.

I don't know whether Bradbury and Evans have sent you a copy of (in one sense) my *great* book. Anyhow I hope you will accept the accompanying copy from me as a very slight mark of my appreciation of your kind and friendly encouragement during its arrangement and production. With my best regards,

Believe me, yours faithfully,

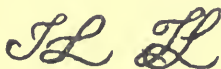
John Forster, Esq.

JOHN LEECH.

&c. &c.

## SIGNATURES.

THE signatures adopted by LEECH took various forms. Sometimes he wrote his name in full, at others his initials only; then his name and initial only, and lastly the familiar leech in a bottle as a rebus. It has been suggested by some that each kind of signature had its own signification according to the circumstances under which the drawing was produced. That is, he used his *full name* when the idea or subject of the drawing was entirely the artist's own; the *initials only* were appended when the idea or subject-matter had been furnished, and the drawing only was the work of his pencil; and the *rebus* when the subject and sketch have both been furnished by a second person, and the artist, in his inimitable style, elaborated them into the finished picture. This argument, ingenious as it may seem, cannot be correct for the reason that, in some cases, such as in the illustrations to *Christopher Tadpole*, he used *all three signatures*, whereas it is pretty certain that, according to the above reasoning, the *initials only* should have been appended, the subjects of those illustrations having been furnished by the author. Again, in the series of lithographs of the *Children of the Mobility* may be seen a signature not often met with, in which he has combined his Christian name in full, followed by the *rebus*, and the abbreviation *delt*.







## SKETCHES BY JOHN LEECH.

THE extraordinary prices realised at the sale of LEECH's sketches after his death, even for the roughest outlines, amply testified to the high esteem in which his works were held by the public. Sir EDWIN LANDSEER used to say that there was scarcely a sketch of Mr. LEECH's which was not worthy to be framed by itself and hung on our walls. It is, therefore, strange that he should never have received Academical honours, which would, as averred by one of the witnesses before the Royal Academy Commission in 1864, have been secured to him in any other country but his own.

His sketches are now seldom met with, unless in the portfolios of private collectors. Some interesting ones are being permanently exhibited in the Museum at South Kensington, from which I have selected three of the most characteristic, and have carefully reproduced them for publication in this book. Important steps are now being taken to secure by purchase a number of such sketches for the Art Institute at Manchester, a committee of artists and other influential persons having been formed to conduct that transaction and collect donations. Mr. JOHN RUSKIN's opinion of LEECH's work is given in a letter written by him to the sisters of the artist at the time when the above scheme was contemplated, and the assistance of that noted critic was requested. He says:—

"Admittedly it contains the finest definition and natural history of the classes of our society, the kindest and subtlest analysis of its foibles, the tenderest flattery of its pretty and well-bred ways, with which the modesty of subservient genius ever amused or immortalised careless masters. But it is not generally known how much more valuable, as art, the first sketches for the woodcuts were than the finished drawings, even before those drawings sustained any loss in engraving.

"John Leech was an absolute master of the elements of character—but not by any means of those of *chiaroscuro*—and the admirableness of his work diminished as it became elaborate. The first few lines in which he sets down his purpose are invariably of all drawing that I know the most wonderful in their accurate felicity and prosperous haste. It is true that the best possible drawing, whether slight or elaborate, is never hurried. Holbein or Titian, if they lay only a couple of lines, yet lay them quietly, and leave them entirely right. But it needs a certain sternness of temper to do this." . . . .

"But of all rapid and condensed realisation ever accomplished by the

*pencil, John Leech's is the most dainty, and the least fallible, in the subjects of which he was cognizant. Not merely right in the traits which he seizes, but refined in the sacrifice of what he refuses.*

"The drawing becomes slight through fastidiousness, not indolence, and the finest discretion has left its touches rare.

"In flexibility and lightness of pencilling, nothing but the best outlines of Italian masters with the silver point can be compared to them. That Leech sketched English squires instead of saints, and their daughters instead of martyrs, does not in the least affect the question respecting skill of pencilling; and I repeat deliberately that nothing but the best work of sixteenth-century Italy with the silver point exists in art which in rapid refinement these playful English drawings do not excel."

Mr. HAMERTON, in his *Graphic Arts*, pays a similar tribute to the excellence of LEECH's pen-drawings, which he holds up for comparison with similar work by the great serious masters of the pen, such as RAPHAEL and TITIAN. "We know, of course," he says, "the distinction between a mental satirist of modern life and an inventor of immortal beauty, but in such matters as the judicious use of the ink-line in shading, JOHN LEECH is comparable to RAPHAEL, or to any artist who ever lived."

Viewing the artist's work from another standpoint, the late Archbishop of Canterbury did not scruple to avow his opinion that LEECH was a "pioneer of popular thought in a moral and religious direction."



CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF WORKS  
ILLUSTRATED WHOLLY OR PARTLY  
BY JOHN LEECH.

1835. *Etchings and Sketchings*, by A. Pen, Esq. 4 pages. 4to.
1837. *Jack Bragg*. Theodore Hook.
1840. *The Comic Latin Grammar*. Paul Prendergast (Percival Leigh). Plates and cuts.
- Do. *The Comic English Grammar*. Gilbert A'Beckett. Fifty illustrations. 8vo.
- Do. *The Natural History of Evening Parties*. Albert Smith. 16mo.
1841. *The Children of the Mobility*. Seven lithographs in a wrapper. 4to.
- Do. *Written Caricatures*, by C. C. Pepper (pseud.) 12mo.
- Do. *The Porcelain Tower, or Nine Stories of China*, by T. T. T. Three etchings and fifteen cuts.
1842. *Merrie England in the Olden Time*. G. Daniel. Plates. 2 vols. 8vo.
- Do. *Ingoldsby Legends*. T. Barham. J. Leech and G. Cruikshank. 3 vols. 8vo.
- Do. *Hood's Comic Annual*.
1843. *The Wassail Bowl—Humorous Tales and Sketches*. Albert Smith. Etchings and woodcuts.
- Do. *Jack the Giant Killer*. 16mo.
- Do. *The Barnabys in America, or Adventures of the Widow Wedded*. Mrs. Trollope. 3 vols. 8vo.
- 1843-5. *The Illuminated Magazine*. Edited by Douglas Jerrold. Partly by J. L. Coloured plates and cuts. 4to.
1844. *The Comic Arithmetic*. Woodcuts. 8vo.
- Do. *Punch's Snapdragon for Children*. Four etchings. 12mo.

1844. *A Christmas Carol*. Charles Dickens. Four coloured plates and cuts. Sm. 8vo.
- Do. *The Adventures of Mr. Ledbury and his Friend Jack Johnson*. A. Smith. 8vo.
- Do. *Richard Savage, a Romance of Real Life*. C. Whitehead. Seventeen illustrations. 3 vols. 8vo.
- Do. *Jessie Phillips, a Tale*. F. Trollope. Portrait and eleven plates. 8vo.
1845. *The Chimes*. Charles Dickens. Partly by J. L. Sm. 8vo.
- Do. *Hints on Life, or How to Rise in Society*. Frontispiece.
- Do. *Young Master Troublesome, or Master Jacky's Holidays*.
- 1845-8. *The Shilling Magazine*. Edited by Douglas Jerrold. Plates illustrating the Story of "St. Giles and St. James."
1846. *The Quizziology of the British Drama*. Gilbert A'Beckett. Frontispiece by J. L. 12mo.
- Do. *The Physiology of Evening Parties*. Albert Smith. Partly by J. L. 12mo.
- Do. *The Comic Annual*. A republication of Hood's "Whimsicalities." Forty-five illustrations.
- Do. *The Battle of Life*. Charles Dickens. Partly by J. L. Sm. 8vo.
- Do. *The Story of a Feather*. Douglas Jerrold.
1847. *The Comic History of England*. Gilbert A'Beckett. Ten coloured etchings and numerous cuts. 8vo.
1848. *The Life and Adventures of Oliver Goldsmith*. J. Forster. Partly by J. L.
- Do. *The Rising Generation*. Twelve lithographs. Folio.
- Do. *The Struggles and Adventures of Christopher Tadpole*. Albert Smith. Etchings by J. L. 8vo.
- Do. *The Haunted Man, or the Ghost's Bargain*. Charles Dickens. Partly by J. L. Sm. 8vo.
1849. *Book of Ballads*. Bon Gaultier (Theodore Martin and Aytoun). J. L. and R. Doyle.
- Do. *A Man Made of Money*. D. Jerrold. Twelve illustrations.

1851. *The Month*. Edited by Albert Smith.
1852. *Dashes of American Humour*. H. H. Paul. 8vo.
- Do. *The Comic History of Rome*. Gilbert A'Beckett. Ten coloured etchings and numerous woodcuts. 8vo.
1853. *The Fortunes of Hector O'Halloran and his Man Mark Antony Toole*. W. H. Maxwell. 8vo.
- Do. *Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour*. R. Surtees. Coloured etchings and numerous cuts. 8vo.
1854. *The Great Highway*. S. W. Fullom.
- Do. *Pictures of Life and Character*. From "Punch." Vol. I.
- Do. *Handley Cross*. R. Surtees. Coloured etchings and numerous cuts. 8vo.
1856. *The Paragreens*. 8vo.
1857. *Merry Pictures* by the comic hands of "Phiz," Leech, and others. Folio.
- Do. *The Militiaman at Home and Abroad*. Emeritus (pseud.)
1858. *An Encyclopædia of Rural Sports*. Illustrated from drawings by J. L. 8vo.
- Do. *Pictures of Life and Character*. Second Series.
- Do. *Ask Mamma, or the Richest Commoner in England*. R. Surtees. Coloured etchings and numerous cuts. 8vo.
1859. *A Little Tour in Ireland, being a visit to Dublin, Limerick, Killarney, Cork, &c.* By an Oxonian (Canon Hole). Coloured folding plates and numerous cuts.
- Do. *Newton Dograne. A Story of English Life*. F. Francis.
- Do. *Soapey Sponge*. (Sporting.)
- Do. *The Flyers of the Hunt*. J. Mills. 8vo.
- Do. *Paul Prendergast*. 8vo.
1860. *Pictures of Life and Character*. Third Series.
- Do. *Mr. Briggs and his Doings*. (Fishing.) Twelve coloured plates. Ob. folio.
- Do. *Plain or Ringlets*. R. Surtees. Coloured etchings and numerous cuts. 8vo.
1861. *Puck on Pegasus*. Pennell. Partly by J. L. 4to.

1861. *Pictures of Life and Character.* Fourth series.
1864. *The Follies of the Year.* Twenty-one coloured etchings from "Punch's Pocket-Books." 1844-64. Ob. 4to.
- Do. *Early Pencillings from "Punch."* A reprint of the political cartoons, &c. 4to.
- 1864-5. *Later Pencillings from "Punch."* 4to.
1865. *Mr. Facey Romford's Hounds.* R. Surtees. J. L. and "Phiz." Coloured etchings and numerous cuts. 8vo.
1869. *Pictures of Life and Character.* Fifth series.
1870. *Etchings,* with letterpress descriptions. 4to.
- Do. *Later Pencillings from "Punch,"* with Notes by Mark Lemon. 252 humorous cartoons. 4to.
- *Fly Leaves.* Lithographs.
- *Sketches of Life and Character, taken at the Police Court, Bow Street.* G. Hodder.
- *The Fiddle-Faddle Fashion Book.*
- *Jack the Giant Killer.* Percival Leigh. Twelve humorous plates and numerous cuts. Cr. 8vo.

*Uniform with the present work. By the same Author.*  
THE ONLY PUBLISHED BIOGRAPHY OF "THE ILLUSTRATOR OF DICKENS."

# PHIZ

(HABLÔT KNIGHT BROWNE), A MEMOIR.

Including a Selection from his Correspondence and Notes on his Principal Works. The book is also embellished with numerous Illustrations, including a Portrait of "Phiz" and Seven full-page Engravings printed on plate paper, besides many process Reproductions of Comic and Original Sketches, with which the deceased artist was wont to illustrate the exceedingly droll letters to his sons, now for the first time published.

*A few extra copies of this Memoir have been printed, with the addition of new and valuable family and biographical matter.*

## EXTRACTS FROM OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

"Phiz" is a timely little memoir of the late Hablôt K. Browne, by Mr. Fred. G. Kitton. Mr. Kitton is already known as an artist, many of his drawings having appeared in this journal for some years past, together with occasional articles. The monograph is extremely interesting; it embodies a great number of facts (some of them curious), it includes a selection from the deceased artist's correspondence, and some appreciative notes on his principal works; and it is illustrated with numerous engravings, mostly printed from the original blocks. The correspondence is noteworthy, being eminently characteristic of the man. Some of the letters were written to Charles Dickens, and are now published for the first time; others, addressed to his son, are brimful of rollicking fun, geniality, and affection. Altogether the world has reason to be grateful for so comprehensive and instructive a memoir of an artist whose work perhaps has yet to be appreciated at its true worth. Mr. Kitton has done his task in a sincere and simple fashion; his little work will do much to rouse an intelligent admiration of drawings which have the rare quality of imagination as well as humour, humanity, and a piquant individuality.—*Graphic*, Sep. 23, 1882.

Under the title of "Phiz: a Memoir," Mr. F. G. Kitton has published in pamphlet form a sketch of the life and works of this distinguished book illustrator, which will be acceptable to his friends and admirers. . . . It comprises many interesting glimpses of Phiz's habits, and numerous particulars of his works both in illustrating and in water colour drawing. The selection from his correspondence, which shows him to have possessed a vein of very pleasant humour, adds much to the value of the brochure, which is accompanied by some reproductions of his sketches made, for the most part, for "The Old Curiosity Shop," "Barnaby Rudge," and other of Charles Dickens's works.—*Daily News*, Aug. 25, 1882.

Of all monographs on great men, the most acceptable are those which are thrown off in an unpretentious way, but with due care as to facts, while a general interest is freshly excited. Such an instance is afforded by a brochure on Phiz, which has just been written by Mr. F. G. Kitton. The author neither pretends to be nor is an eminent judge of the arts, but he has an intelligent appreciation both of the work and the pleasant, manly character of the late Hablôt Knight Browne. . . .—*Liverpool Daily Post*, Aug. 21, 1882.

We are glad to welcome even such a short and slight account of an artist whose name certainly deserves to rank among the few real "illustrators" of fiction. . . .—*Academy*, Oct. 3, 1882.

It is always satisfactory to see such an effort as this made to keep alive the interest felt in those who have served the public well in their respective spheres. . . .—*Bookseller*.

This little memoir will be warmly appreciated by those who wish to preserve some memento of an artist, who for thirty years contributed in no small degree to the success of some of our best-known novels. Some specimens of the etchings in "The Old Curiosity Shop," and an excellent portrait of Mr. Browne, add to the value of the book, which might have been very easily enlarged, looking at the interest of the subject.—*Life*, Dec. 21, 1882.

We are enabled to present the readers of the *Reporters' Magazine*, not only with a series of excellent illustrations, but with the treat of a choice biographical note which has been attached to the well-received Memoir of "Phiz," by Mr. Fred G. Kitton. This note will see the light for the first time attached to a few copies of an extra edition for "collectors," printed on special paper. The excellent little biography has been so well reviewed in the press, that it is unnecessary for us to refer to it here further than to say that those who admire the work of Dickens should procure a copy while a copy is to be had. . . .—*Reporters' Magazine*, Nov. 1882.

We desire to draw attention to the recently-published notice of this genial artist by Mr. Fred. G. Kitton. . . . It contains a portrait of "Phiz," and seven full-page engravings printed on plate paper, and is the only published biography of "the illustrator of Dickens." The first edition was exhausted in six weeks, and the present issue contains new and valuable family and biographical matter. As the memoir is not only interesting in itself, but is sure to immediately become scarce, the trade will do well to secure copies without delay. . . .—*Printing Times and Lithographer*, Nov. 15, 1882.

LONDON: GEORGE REDWAY, 12, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

## John Leech.

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NEARLY every home in England has lost a friend in the sudden departure of John Leech. It is not an artist of the common type who has taken leave of us. Artists great as he have gone before him, and left no void in our households. He, through the happy adaptation of his art, had made himself our familiar friend, had communed with us from week to week, had seized our passing thoughts and the fleeting images of daily occurrence, had been, as it were, present with us in all our haunts, had led and mingled in our conversation, had seen what we saw, had felt what we felt, had made merry with us by the way, had been for more than twenty years exchanging glances with us, and humouring us with thousands of bright fancies. His was an art that, in a peculiar sense, came home to our bosoms and businesses, and became part and parcel of our social life. His pictures were not to be hung at arm's length upon our walls. They came down from our walls; we had them on our tables; we kept them in our pockets; we held them in railway-carriages with the wind dashing in our faces; we got them by post in far-away country houses; we took them with the newspaper to con in the shadow of the trees; we talked of them for days; we not only talked of them, but also seemed to talk with them. We knew Briggs, we were not unacquainted with Mossoo, we joined in the laughter which Mr. Tom Noddy provoked, we adored the bevy of fair dainties, to whom our friend introduced us, and we envied Mr. Punch, who received their caresses under the mistletoe. The artist seemed to be speaking with us, and to be one of us. He made himself kin to every rank of life. He seemed to be equally at home, whether in the filthiest dens of London or in the most brilliant drawing-rooms. He was with us and among us through his art, as no man before him had been. He was a felt presence in all our assemblies, and it was the presence of a fine spirit and a most genial nature. Who is this kind and sunny companion whom we seemed to know so well, and whose death is felt almost as a personal loss by myriads that never saw his face? We all knew or seemed to know the artist: we should like to know the man.

But Mr. Leech, more than any other artist, lived in his art, and carried it into the social life of his time; so that, in his case, it is impossible to distinguish between the man and his profession. It is his peculiarity as an artist, that into art he transfused his life—the life, habits, thoughts, observations of one of the best of English gentlemen, full of feeling, quick of eye, refined of taste, fond of society, delighting in all manly exercises, and moving much about the world. So much of an entire life, indeed, with its abounding activities and many-changing hues,



it had never before been possible to translate into the forms of pictorial art. And thus, when any one who had the privilege of knowing Mr. Leech is asked to describe what manner of man he was, the answer is, that, literally and without a metaphor, he lives in his printed pages, and there is his portraiture. Almost everything one can say of him has been already registered by his own pencil. Not that he was an egotist, save in so far as we are all egotists in being able to speak only of or from our own experiences. From day to day, and from year to year, for nearly the quarter of a century, Mr. Leech pictured his experiences of life with infallible accuracy and with undeviating regularity, and the result is such a memoir of his mind, such a continuous reflection of his history, as no other artist before him has been able to leave on record. Anything we can say of his private life must appear poor and tame in comparison with his own vivid reflections and sketches of the life in which he moved, of the daily round of his observations, of the people he mixed with, of the cares he sympathized with, of the follies that amused him, of the things he loved and of the things he hated. Nevertheless, the few notes which follow may have their interest, as even the most trifling remembrances of a great man are to be cherished like the relics of a saint.

John Leech was a London boy, born on the 29th of August, 1817. He was educated at the Charterhouse with another boy, who afterwards became famous, and who was somewhat his senior—William Makepeace Thackeray. When he left school it was to study medicine; but these were days when even the best medical education which London could afford was not of a very high order, and when it was more common than it is now to train the young student by an apprenticeship to some general practitioner—in short, by a system of fagging; and John Leech, bent on entering a profession which was indicated to him by his surname, became the fag of a medical man, who may best be called Rawkins, because two incipient surgeons, Albert Smith and the subject of this memoir, have given him celebrity under that name. “Mr. Rawkins,” says Albert Smith, “was so extraordinary a person for a medical practitioner, that had we only read of him instead of having known him, we should at once have put him down as the far-fetched creation of an author’s brain. He was about eight-and-thirty years old and of Herculean form, except his legs, which were small by comparison with the rest of his body. But he thought that he was modelled after the statues of antiquity: and indeed as respected his nose, which was broken, he was not far wrong in his idea—that feature having been rather damaged in some hospital skirmish when he was a student. His face was adorned with a luxuriant fringe of black whiskers, meeting under his chin, whilst his hair of the same hue was cut rather short about his head, and worn without the least regard to any particular style or direction. But it was his class of pursuits which made him so singular a character. Every available apartment in his house, not actually occupied by human beings, was appropriated to the conserving of innumerable rabbits, guinea-pigs, and ferrets. His areas were filled with

poultry; birdeagès hung at every window; and the whole of his roof had been converted into one enormous pigeon-trap, in which it was his most favourite occupation to sit on fine afternoons with a pipe and brandy-and-water, and catch his neighbours' birds. He had very little private practice: the butcher, baker, and tobaccoconist, were his chief patients, and employed him more especially with the intention of working out their accounts. He derived his principal income from the retail of his shop, his appointments of medical man to the police force and parish poor, and breeding fancy rabbits. These various avocations pretty well filled up his time; and, when at home, he passed his spare minutes in practising gymnastics—balancing himself upon one hand, laying hold of staples and keeping himself out at right angles to the wall, with other feats of strength, the acquisition of which he deemed necessary in enabling him to support the character of Hercules—his most favourite personation—with due effect."

There may be some exaggeration in the picture of Rawkins as presented in the *Adventures of Mr. Ledbury*; and in order to tone it down a little we have ventured to omit a few of the details. Still there is truth enough in it to enable one to understand how young John Leech should be attracted to Rawkins. A doctor who kept pigeons and rabbits and guinea-pigs, who was great in wrestling, boxing, and running, who excelled in all feats of strength, and who combined the pursuit of science with the enjoyment of sport, would naturally be the hero of a schoolboy's fancy, and the great exemplar in whose footsteps it would be glorious to follow. No one, however, will be surprised to learn that Rawkins did not succeed in his profession, and that he was not likely to give any pupil of his a prosperous entrance into it. Young Leech soon discovered that a life moulded by Rawkins, however it might lure his boyish ambition, was not going to yield him much profit. In point of fact, Rawkins himself saw the wisdom ere long of relinquishing his profession. He had for some time been paying his addresses to the widowed landlady of the large public-house at the end of his street. Eventually he married her and turned tapster. His old pupils used to call upon him and patronize his beer, which he drew for them in his shirt-sleeves. It is said that he was originally a Quaker, and that he died a missionary at the antipodes. Young Leech's indentures were transferred from this queer character to Dr. John Cockle, who is now physician to the Royal Free Hospital; but it does not appear that the study of medicine, when under a new preceptor it became more serious, became also more attractive to him. He had early shown a talent for drawing, and his fellow-students in St. Bartholomew's Hospital still remember how he amused them with his sketches. Mr. Perceval Leigh, for one, remembers him there in 1832, when he was but fifteen years of age, attending the anatomical lectures of Mr. Stanley. He remembers especially that Leech was accustomed to make notes of the more remarkable faces of his condisciples. Amongst them was one whose peculiar plumpness and roundness of cheek had obtained for him the nickname of Buccinator, from the muscle which is especially exerted in the

act of blowing a trumpet. The comical effect of his rotund countenance was increased by a pair of spectacles that made him the very image of Mr. Pickwick; and with that image, doubtless, in his eye, Leech called upon Mr. Dickens while the *Pickwick Papers* were in progress, and offered to continue the series of illustrations which were interrupted by the death of Seymour. The Buccinator, however, was but one of many sketches with which he amused his companions. Another which is well remembered is that of Jack Reeve, as Cupid, dancing on a sunflower. The earliest sketches of his which are still preserved belong to this period, and have been kindly lent to us through Mr. Mark Lemon. They cover both sides of a sheet of paper, and have punning titles after the manner of the woodcuts in which Thomas Hood played his pranks. Here is one of them, not altogether the best, but selected because it is the most complete.



It is entitled *Belligerents*; and one can see in it distinctly, rough as it is, a foreshadowing of the case with which afterwards he depicted any kind of action. It was always his great strength as a draughtsman that he drew action with astonishing fidelity. It is in the seizure of evanescent action that the genius of the artist is most clearly seen, and Mr. Leech was always most happy where there was most movement in his pictures.

He published his first work at the age of eighteen. It was entitled, *Etchings and Sketchings, by A. Pen, Esq.*; and had this characteristic motto from the speech of Cardinal Wolsey :—

That noble lady  
Or gentleman that is not freely merry  
Is not my friend.

The little work, published at the price of “2s. plain, 3s. coloured,” consisted of four quarto sheets, covered with clever sketches, slightly caricatured, of cabmen, policemen, street-musicians, donkeys, broken-down hacks, and many other oddities of London life. Most of these sketches, however, were very incomplete, and were mere suggestions of heads, of half-length and whole-length figures. About the same time, he turned his attention to lithography, and by means of it got into circulation some political caricatures, which are not without ability. Their ability, however, is that of the man who had not yet found the secret of his power, and was compelled to accommodate himself to the standard of the print-sellers. Having drawn his pictures upon a stone, he has been known to spend a weary day in carrying the heavy stone from publisher to publisher in search of a buyer. It was his business, therefore, to work in the style which was then most popular. One of these lithographs will pass for all. We have now before us a large folio, containing two pictures, entitled, the one, *Vive le Roi*, the other, *Vive la Reine*. The Melbourne Ministry had been severely criticized by *The Times* newspaper, which had just then begun to proclaim that the Whigs were incompetent, that they were alienating their best friends, and that the Tories were rising again into favour. Mr. Leech's two sketches were addressed to *The Times*, and were an attempt to turn its statement into ridicule. In the one, there was a crowd of butchers, surrounded with carcasses, and shouting some doggerel with the chorus of “Vive le Raw! Vive le Raw!” In the other, a throng of cabmen had mustered together in the midst of a pelting shower, and, brandishing their whips, roared their doggerel with the chorus of “Vive la Rain! Vive la Rain!” These were published as “facts for *The Times* proving the increase of Toryism.” So Mr. Leech got on as he could, offering his sketches to one publisher after another, working very hard, and earning but small pay. It was in these days of uncertainty that he applied to Mr. Dickens for permission to illustrate the *Pickwick Papers*; but Mr. Hablot Browne had been before him. Then he concocted schemes of drollery with his friends, and especially with Mr. Perceval Leigh, who had been his fellow-student at St. Bartholomew's. Thus it was a favourite idea of Mr. Leech's to publish a comic Latin Grammar as a freak, he contributing the illustrations, and Mr. Leigh the text. This, as he proposed it, would have been a bit of fun, consisting of a few pages; but ultimately, as published in 1840, it became a more elaborate burlesque. It has the merit of being not only the most amusing, but also the most legitimate, of the burlesques in which Mr. Leech took part—much more legitimate, for example, than a Comic History of England. And now



we begin to find Mr. Leech active in many ways. He has sketches in *Bell's Life*; he produces a most successful burlesque of Mulready's post-office envelope; in conjunction with his friend Leigh, he gets up a quiz upon the fashionable art and literature of the day, under the title of *The Fiddle-Faddle Fashion Book*. The same pair, working in concert, next produce *The Children of the Mobility*, a parody on a then well-known work devoted to the serious glorification of our juvenile aristocracy; and next again, *The Comic English Grammar*; while about the same time Mr. Leech obtains a regular engagement on *Bentley's Miscellany*.

Then came *Punch*, the memoirs of which will one day form one of the most curious chapters in the history of English literature and art. We all know what an extraordinary success has attended this publication; but perhaps we do not sufficiently consider that an extraordinary combination of genius, marshalled with uncommon skill, could alone have led to such success. Eternal joking is, after all, a very dreary thing, and requires to be sustained by qualities of mind which are above joking. It is not because a comic paper was wanted, and *Punch* was the first to supply the want, that it has succeeded. Regular comic writing, squibs by the yard, and jokes by the dozen, are not more interesting than a manufactory of poems would be, sonnets by the score, and soliloquies by the hundred-weight. *Punch* was singular in being the product of men of genius, true and rare. It is impossible to point to any associated work of any country in which were engaged such a constellation of genius. Of the living one must be silent; but one can speak freely of Hood, Jerrold, Thackeray, and Leech:—of Hood, whose power over language was an exquisite witchcraft, whose mind was elf-like, and who, if he was habitually gay and lissom as a fairy, had also his stately and sterner moods, in which he reached even to the tragic; of Jerrold, who was undoubtedly at the time of his death the greatest wit in England, and who seemed almost as a disembodied spirit to any one that saw him and heard him—saw him looking out of his keen colourless eyes, and witnessed the miraculous rapidity and complexity of his thoughts; of Thackeray, who belongs to the race of the giants, and who being one of the best prose writers of any age, was the most classical writer of his own; lastly, of Leech—that man of remarkable genius, whose collected works form such a history, not only of his own mind, but also of the social structure of his day, as no other country, no previous time, possesses, and who shines forth in every page to which he has put his hand as the man of truth and gentle heart; the man who, abounding in fun, never was carried away by it, nor for the sake of a laugh turned his pencil to shame; the man of honour and refinement, who loved to dwell upon all that was good, and beautiful, and natural; and who, when he lashed what was ugly, or mean, or odious, did so with a lightness of humour and a polish of manner that are a thousand times more effectual than the indignant rage or the rude caricature of his predecessors in pictorial satire.

The first number of *Punch* appeared on the 17th July, 1841, and Mr. Leech's first contribution to it appeared in its fourth issue on the 7th of August. It seems to be his only contribution to the first half-yearly volume of *Punch*; and his contributions to the second volume even do not seem to be very numerous—little more than half-a-dozen. This first sketch is entitled "Foreign Affairs," and is a pretty accurate representation of such foreigners as may be seen any day in London. What is most remarkable about the sketch, however, is this, that it sent down the circulation of *Punch* to half what it was. It is an odd thing to say that he, who afterwards became the most conspicuous and the most attractive contributor to the well-known quarto print, should have done it a serious injury in his first connection with it. The injury was effected in this wise. The process had not then been discovered of dividing a wood-block into parts, and giving the parts to several hands to be cut. The artist drew upon an entire block which could not be taken to pieces, and only one engraver could work upon it at a time. Such blocks, therefore, if they were of considerable size, took a long time to cut; and Mr. Leech's first drawing for *Punch*, as it filled a whole page, was not ready for publication on the appointed day. It was a day behindhand, and this it was that played havoc with the sale. But the fact itself has its interest as suggesting one of the causes that conduced to Mr. Leech's great success. The perfecting of the art of the wood-engraver came in the very nick of time to help him on, by ensuring that rapidity of publication, which was to him a great encouragement, and to the public an inestimable boon. It ensured freshness and novelty. The whim or fashion of the day might be seen pictured by John Leech even before the public began to notice it much in real life, and the droll story, that belonged to the froth and spray of the passing wave, had not time to become stale before it made matter for a sketch, and might be seen in *Punch's* gallery. In this connection it should be remembered that if Mr. Leech did great things for *Punch*, *Punch* also did great things for him. It gave him a great opportunity such as no artist before him had enjoyed, and which he alone was able to seize. Newspaper art was an utter novelty, and he gave to that novelty the dignity, the grace, and the nameless attractions of genius. Week after week there flowed from his pencil an endless succession of scenes—now of high life and now of low life; now of indoors and now of the street and the public place; now of the town and now of the country; now of England and now of foreign lands; now of summer and now of winter; now of sunshine and now of storm. He caught the very image of his time, and fixed it in his sketches with such a combined strength and delicacy, that one knew not which most to admire in him, his innate sense of beauty or his firm adhesion to accuracy. Not content to represent our social life in its essence as he found it, he insisted on representing it with all its surroundings and a multiplicity of little details, which many of us hardly notice. If he had to depict ladies, he not only took care to draw them well and to show their minds in



their faces, he was scrupulously exact as to their toilet, he knew all about the furniture in the room, and what knick-knacks of things should be on the table, and he did not forget the dog, whether it was a toy-terrier or a saddle-backed Skye, or a comical turnspit, such as he himself cherished. He was even happier when he got out-of-doors, and led us into the country. What scenes he drew of the hunting-field, of deer-stalking among Highland hills, and of fishing in Highland glens! His first care, of course, was given to the tenants of the scene—to the men and the horses. He delighted in horses, and he introduced us at his pleasure to the clowns of the fens, to Yorkshire farmers and gamekeepers, or to Highland gillies. But the scenery was a constant wonder, and seemed to give him endless enjoyment. It was a wonder that he could represent so much with means so slight. You had the rocky river and the boisterous sea; you had a dull day in the ploughed lands of the long, far flats, and you had a bright one on the slopes of the smooth South Downs; you were lost amid the trimmest English lanes and hedgerows, or you rested in the shadow of the picturesque pollards by the river side. With the means at his disposal, he could do no more than suggest; but he suggested with a felicity of touch that made the scene at once apparent.

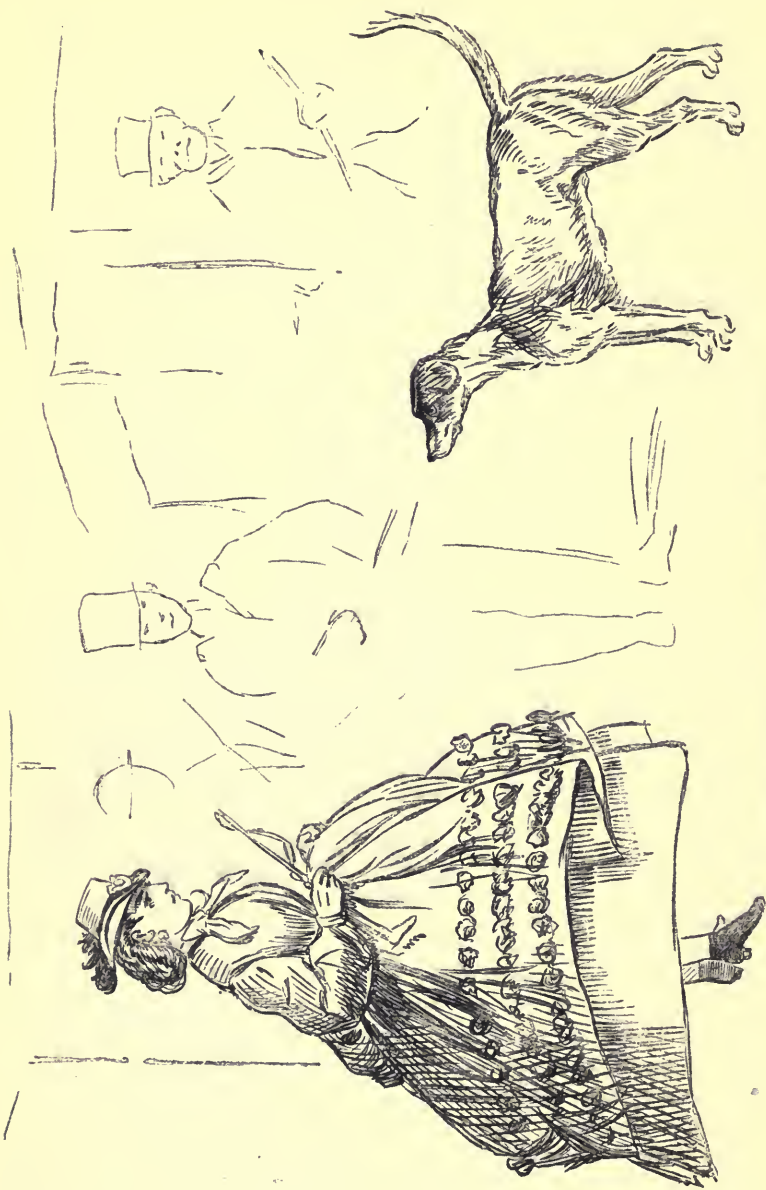
Any one looking over his sketches, noting how numerous are those contributed to *Punch* alone, remembering also that he was ever engaged in illustrating other works—Mr. Dickens's Christmas Books, *The Ingoldsby Legends*, *The Bon Gualtier Ballads*, *Punch's Pocket-Book*, *Once a Week*, *The Tour in Ireland*, *Soapy Sponge*, *Plain or Ringlets*, *Handley Cross*, *Ask Mamma*, together with many more publications which it is impossible here to enumerate—and then again bearing in mind how full of matter his sketches were, how infinite in their variety, must see clearly that to accomplish what he did, Mr. Leech had to work very hard. He was ever at work, both consciously and unconsciously. Well known to his friends was a certain little pocket-book in which he was always making notes. If he did not actually make notes pencil in hand, still he was studying in other ways. When he went to enjoy a day's hunting anywhere, perhaps he would pick out some fox-hunter that took his fancy, and would keep behind him the whole day, watching all his attitudes in the saddle, and marking every item of his dress to the last button and buttonhole. Now because his business was thus connected with his pleasure, and because he was very quick in forming his conceptions of pictures, some of his friends were inclined to be sceptical as to the hardness of his work. It is a great mistake, however, to suppose that pleasant labour is not labour, and that what is done rapidly involves but a slight effort. All concentrated endeavour wears the mind, and it was well said by a painter to one who underrated the worth of a picture produced in a week, "You forget that I have spent my whole life in learning to paint that picture in so short a time." But Mr. Leech's working was more rapid in appearance than it was in reality. He formed his ideas very quickly; he saw his way in a moment. Mr. Samuel Lucas

went to him once for a little sketch, which he wanted as the initial letter to a tale that was about to appear in *Once a Week*. It was the story of a clown who had to crack his jokes in a circus while his wife was in her dying agonies. She was a columbine who, standing on horseback, used to leap through hoops. On the occasion of one of her leaps she missed her footing, fell to the ground, and injured herself fatally. To illustrate this tale a sketch was wanted, suggesting the initial letter I. Before Mr. Lucas had ceased speaking the thing was done. "I think this is what you want," said Mr. Leech, showing him the first draught of the following sketch, which, by the way, is remarkable not alone for its instantaneousness, but also as an indication of what he, who generally took a humorous view of life, could achieve in the direction of tragedy. See, again, how perfect, and how vital, is the slight suggestion of the horse underneath. When Mr. Mark Lemon went to him with the suggestion of a cartoon for

*Punch*, he was always struck with Mr. Leech's rapidity of understanding. He would sometimes knock off one of his large cartoons in an hour, or an hour and a half, while the friendly editor chatted with him over a cigar. But although Mr. Leech was thus rapid in his conceptions, he very rarely trusted himself to draw in the first instance upon the wood; and the artist who first of all makes a tolerably complete sketch upon paper, then laboriously transfers the sketch to the block by means of a tracing, and then again minutely fills



in the details upon the wood, can scarcely be described as a very rapid worker. At all events it is plain that his work gave him an immense deal of minute trouble. One consequence of this, however, is that nearly all his first sketches upon paper remain, and these will probably be soon exhibited to the public. They are of course rough in comparison with his finished work, but in all their roughness they are sometimes even more powerful. In the very last work on which he was engaged the contrast between the bold lines of his first sketch and the minute elaboration of the picture, in so far as it has been transferred to the wood, is more remarkable than ever. This careful elaboration will, to some extent, be seen in the copy of it which we have been permitted to publish. The block itself is too precious a possession



AN AFTERNOON ON THE FLAGS—COMPLIMENTS.

to be cut by the engraver; but Mr. Mark Lemon, junior, has, by means of photography, succeeded in transferring its lines to another block which has been cut for our use. The scene is one of a series of what he called Dogleaves, which he intended for the forthcoming Almanac. It is entitled, "An Afternoon on the Flags—Compliments;" and between the lady and the dog there is the faint outline of a huntsman who is supposed to be saying—"She is a Beautiful Creechur, ain't she, my Lady? She's our great Favourite—and Lord Oxfencer always says that for Symmetry and High Breeding, and for Beautiful Nose, she's just like your Ladyship!"

We have said that Mr. Leech's life and character are in his own *Sketches of Life and Character*. Any anecdote that can be told of him has its double in his own works. Suppose we give this anecdote in the words of Mr. Charles Dickens. He was very fond of a boy known to Mr. Dickens, an extraordinarily small boy, but of great spirit, who was a midshipman in the navy. "Whenever this boy came home from a cruise," says Mr. Dickens, "he and Leech, and never anybody else, used to go out in great state, and dine at the Garrick Club, and go to the play, and finish in an exemplary way with kidneys and harmony. On the first of these occasions, the officer came out so frightfully small, that, Leech told us afterwards, he was filled with horror when he saw him eating his dinner at the Garrick with a large knife. On the other hand, he felt that to suggest a small knife to an officer and a gentleman would be an unpardonable affront. So after meditating for some time, he felt that his course was to object to the club knives as enormous and gigantic; to remonstrate with the servant on their huge proportions, and with a grim dissatisfaction to demand small ones. After which, he and the officer messed with great satisfaction, and agreed that things in general were running too large in England." But incidents like these are precisely what we find pictured in his pages; and his friends, pointing to sketch after sketch, can say, "I told him that;" "This happened to himself;" "I was present when he came upon so and so." We select two sketches, for which we are indebted to Messrs. Bradbury and Evans, to illustrate this, not because they are greatly superior to others, but because they show his manner of working. The first is called "Private Theatricals" (see p. 754), and appeared in the Almanac for 1854, with these words under it—"Dismay of Mr. James Jessamy on being told that he will spoil the Whole Thing if he doesn't shave off his Whiskers." The incident happened to himself; it is his own whiskers that were in question; and it is himself that he is here making fun of. So again but a few weeks ago, there appeared in *Punch* the sketch of "A Little Scene at Brussels" (see p. 755), with these words underneath, "T-MRK-XS (who has just come down to breakfast): Here! I say, Garsong! I want a kelkehose for dejewney! der Korfee, and des Hoofs, you know! (N.B. The stout party T. pokes in the ribs is a wealthy Belgian Swell.)" Here the incident is founded on actual occurrence. During this last summer, he went to the continent for





PRIVATE THEATRICALS



A LITTLE SCENE AT BRUSSELS.



the benefit of his health, in company with Mr. Elmore; and it was he himself who made the mistake of addressing a Belgian gentleman as the



waiter. But whereas he himself was tall, he pictures the hero of the escapade as short; whereas he was a gentleman in all his ways, he represents the said hero with the manners of a "gent," terrible in his French.



"NOW JACK, MY BOY! THERE'S NO TIME TO LOSE; WE'VE TEN MILES TO GO TO COVER."

The type of an immense number of these sketches is to be found in his letters; and one must conceive of them as a form of published letter. He writes to a young but most distinguished artist with whom he had formed a close friendship, "When do you return? Mind, you present yourself here directly you come back. You are of course something like this, by this time;" and then on opposite pages of his letter he draws, with pen and ink, two prodigious portraits of his friend, that illustrate the



curious felicity with which he could give a likeness from memory, and preserve the likeness too, while confounding it with extravagances that have no existence in fact. So when he writes to another friend to appoint a day for hunting, he must wind up with a sketch of what is likely to take place on the morning of the hunt. He was troubled with a want of sleep, and indicates, on the sketch, how difficult it will be to wake him up. Now, what we have here in the rough, in his letters, we have highly finished in his published works. Representing scenes of private life, they

have the same relation to art that a man's letters have to literature. They are his mode of correspondence, and they have the biographical character of a correspondence.

If we are at liberty to describe Mr. Leech's work as a kind of epistolary art, a pictorial correspondence, this phrase will have the further advantage of indicating the singularity of his position as an artist. His position is as singular in this century as that of Hogarth was in the last. Sometimes these two men are compared together ; but, indeed, it is impossible to measure them by a common standard. One cannot compare a first-rate letter-writer, like Madame de Sevigné, with a first-rate dramatist, like Molière. We cannot put an idyllic poet on the same level with an epic one. Mr. Leech used a very humble medium for the expression of his thinking ; and he adopted it for better, for worse. It had the disadvantage of being unfit for the higher exercises of pictorial genius ; while, on the other hand, it had the advantage of appealing quickly to prodigious multitudes, and of thus enabling the artist, from week to week for twenty years, to play directly, and without intermission, on the hearts of a whole nation.

And that is the secret of our friend's success ; he had gone to our hearts, and had become part of our life. He had in this century discovered, or at least turned to account, a new method of art, as Hogarth had done in the last century. Hogarth was the first great English painter. Before him a school of painting was impossible in this country, because all great art was identified either with the Catholic faith, and, therefore, as connected with many superstitions, was not to be tolerated by good Protestants ; or with classical mythologies and histories, and, therefore, had little hold on the people. Hogarth made art popular among us by directing it to the incidents of domestic life, and by taking care to charge his pictures even to oppression with a moral purpose. He made art intelligible and attractive to a people who had begun to forget what great pictorial art was ; and engravings of his pictures spread far and wide over the country. But Mr. Leech in the present century drew still nearer to the popular feeling. He found a new way through the instrumentality of *Punch*. Hogarth's way was not entirely his own. He had learnt it from the Dutch masters, and his originality consisted in seeing that by endowing pictures of domestic life with keen moral purpose he could adapt them to the English mind. So Mr. Leech found a way made for him, but he had the merit of instantly seizing on it and making the most of it. His work has in it the necessary limitations of comedy ; it was not often that in the pages of a journal professedly humorous, he could touch tragedy. But allowing for these limitations—the limitation of subject imposed by comedy, and the limitation of treatment imposed by the nature of his means—it is impossible not to be struck with his reach as an artist—with the range of his knowledge, with the accuracy of his eye, with the perfect sympathy that entered into all his touches, with his clearness and simplicity of expres-

sion, with the sense of beauty and the love of nature that regulated all his perceptions. Certainly no man before him, with means so slight, had ever accomplished so much, whether we measure his achievement by the amount of expression in his drawings, or by their effect on the popular mind.

And he who had made himself our friend by the incessant correspondence which he kept up with us, has passed away—destroyed by overwork, and the impossibility of finding rest. He had become nervous, sleepless, easily disturbed by noise, and latterly his nervousness had taken the form of *angina pectoris*, or in plain English, breast-pang. Although this is a very dangerous malady, which is said to destroy life by causing spasm of the heart; and although it was necessary to warn Mr. Leech against all excitement—as riding, quick walking, and overwork—it was not supposed that he was in immediate danger; and if he could only find rest and freedom from anxiety, great hopes were entertained of his recovery. He was naturally, however, of anxious mind, and in his weak state of health was easily overset. A barrel-organ was to him an instrument of fierce torture; if a dog barked in the night, he would watch with morbid wakefulness to catch again the tormenting yelp; and a wheelwright, that at early dawn plied his hammer near him, he had to bargain into silence. At the same time, a generous disposition had led him to undertake responsibilities which wore him down. On the day before his death, he wrote to his kind friend and publisher, Mr. Evans, that he had been suffering from “much annoyance and disturbance.” The end of the sad story has been told in the newspapers, but one cannot help dwelling on it, in the knowledge that if Mr. Leech could have found rest and peace, he might have lived to delight us for many years to come. On that Friday before his death, Dr. Quain assured him that his only chance was in rest; and when, a few hours before he fainted away, he asked Mr. Hutchinson’s permission to work at some drawing—that last unfinished sketch of the lady and the dog—it was given only on the express understanding that it would be an amusement to him. Three hours afterwards, no physician being near him—Dr. Quain being out of town, and his other medical friends having left him to rest—his pain returned to him, and in the anguish of it he died. His pain came to him almost while he was in the act of catering for our entertainment, and he who has done more than perhaps any of his contemporaries, not even excepting Mr. Dickens (for no art of words can in this respect keep pace with that of the pencil), to amuse the present generation, died in agonies which he said were too great to be endured. The news of his death rang through London with a dismal shock. “There was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead.” In what home was not John Leech an inmate? Personally he shunned observation; he was always very quiet and retiring; and few but friends could recognize his handsome face and fine tall figure in a crowd—not even when he rode



past on Red Mullet, a pony for him at least so diminutive that people declared it was not a pony at all, but Punch's dog Toby doing duty for one. He, however, who was so little known to sight, was, for a private person, the best known man in England, and his death was a death in our homes.

What makes his departure most painful is the knowledge that, notwithstanding his great stature as an artist, he had not risen to his full height. Every year he surpassed himself in the originality of his conceptions and in the delicacy of his workmanship. He had always something new for us, and his hand became every day more and more subtle. Moreover, latterly he aspired to find expression in oil-colours—in the highest language of pictorial art. It is true that his mastery of colour was imperfect, and that he did not pretend to claim for his paintings a higher designation than that of sketches in oil. He was in oil-painting but a beginner; and he who had all his life been accustomed to think in black and white, and chiefly in outline, found not a little difficulty in dealing with the new vehicle. Still, his success in it was great enough to inspire himself and his friends with much hope of what he might hereafter accomplish. That hope is now dead, and it seems as if in John Leech there had died another John Leech even greater than he.

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